ENTERTAINMENT / F1

Lea Salonga on Broadway: Having fun as Fantine off and on stage

SPORTS / A25

Marquez must fight Pacquiao first–WBC

BUSINESS / B1

Pagcor to set up $20B Las Vegas-style gambling complex on Manila Bay reclaimed area

NEWS / A2

GMA wants to end hunger in six months

Pinoys warned against eating 'dying' species

WAG NYO KAMI UBUSIN!

DELICIOUS, BUT THEIR numbers are definitely declining.

The Philippine chapter of the WWF, the global conservation organization, has listed shark fin *siomai*, turtle soup and Chilean sea bass as

PINOYS/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

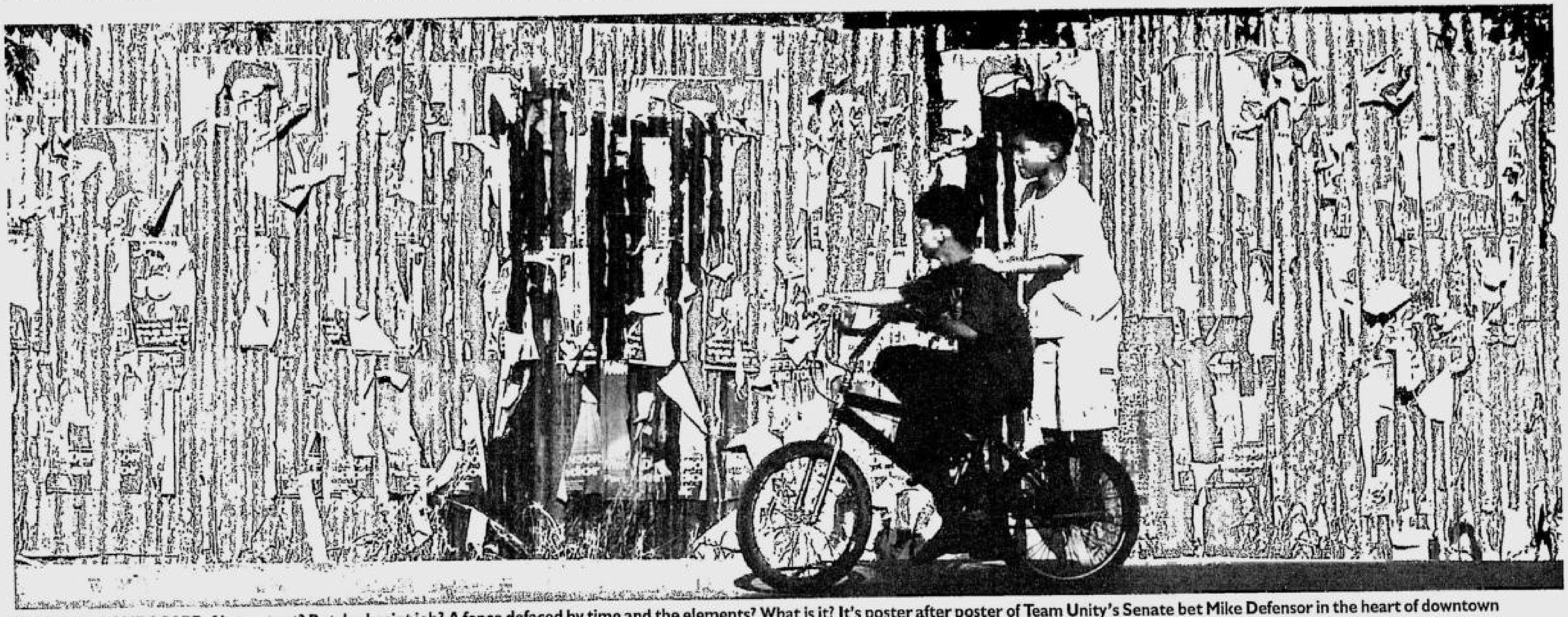
Thursday, March 22, 2007 ★★★ 6 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 104 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

Iggy Arroyo's ex-wife seeks court protection

ALICIA ARROYO, THE ESTRANGED WIFE OF Negros Occidental Rep. Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, fears for her life and has sought court protection from the congressman, according to ABS-CBN.

In a news report late last night, ABS-CBN quoted Alicia, a banker and stockbroker, as saying that unidentified men have been tailing her. She and the congressman have a nine-year-old daughter.

IGGY/ A6



VIOLATED LANDSCAPE. Abstract art? Botched paint job? A fence defaced by time and the elements? What is it? It's poster after poster of Team Unity's Senate bet Mike Defensor in the heart of downtown Tagbilaran City in Bohol. Splashed wall to wall on galvanized iron sheeting, the "mural" is still up there two weeks after the administration candidates' campaign. Attention, Comelec! ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

More pork graft exposed

CORRUPTION CASES

Malacañang rejects general's ₱21-M offer

THANKS BUT NO THANKS.

In a rare move, Malacañang yesterday flatly rejected the offer of a retired Armed Forces comptroller to surrender to the government almost P21 million worth of assets in exchange for the dropping of graft charges filed against him and his family.

"We would like to state up front there are no negotiations taking place involving the government on this matter, and we shall let the law take its course," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement, referring to the compromise offer of Lt. Gen. Jacinto Ligot.

"We owe it to our soldiery and the people to act in their supreme interest, and there can be no bargains in this regard," said Bunye, the spokesperson of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ligot was charged in the Sandiganbayan in 2005 for allegedly amassing P135.28 million in ill-gotten wealth.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, one of those to whom Ligot's offer was addressed, yesterday said he found it "unacceptable" in view of the total value of questionable assets cited in the cases against the Ligots.

Asked by the INQUIRER in a phone interview if he found the offered amount too small, Villa-Ignacio replied in the affirmative.

"If it will be just that paltry amount, we don't want to give the impression that it's very easy to reach a settlement," he said in a mix of Filipino and English.

Villa-Ignacio said his office had long adopted a "set of policies" for defendants considering a plea bargain:

He said there should be:

- "Complete restitution of [the defendant's] civil liabilities" or payment using "all real and personal properties acquired by him over and above his legiti-

MALACAÑANG/ A8

LYN RILLON

WAITING FOR GMA: Hadji Salimah Saripadah (below) and other women in the Muslim village at Barangay 646, Palanca San Miguel, Manila, wait for Ms Arroyo to emerge from a meeting with their barangay officials.

PCs at ₱217,500 each for Luzon IT projects

By Volt Contreras

DUBIOUS PORK BARREL EXPENDITURES HAVE gone techie.

A civil society report on the use of congressional pork barrel uncovered at least six information technology (IT) projects in Luzon in which basic, "unbranded" personal computers installed in public schools were allegedly bought at P217,500 each.

An unbranded PC with licensed software would normally cost just around P50,000 at the most, noted the first installment of "PDAF Watch," an initiative of the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (Code-NGO).

The "overpriced" IT projects were found in Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon.

Pork barrel, a source of kickbacks, is a fund appropriated in the national budget to help lawmakers curry favor with voters by identifying the projects that will be funded by their pork barrel allocations.

PDAF, or Priority Development Assistance Fund, is the pork barrel allocated to members of the House of Representatives and senators.

It is mainly used for projects on a menu set by the Department of Budget and Management, such as health care and education. Congressional Allocation (CA), also a pork barrel, is mainly for infras-

MORE/ A17

DepEd: Test for HS seniors shows aptitude for tech-voc

By Jerry E. Esplanada

MORE THAN HALF OF THE 1.3-MILLION senior high school students who took the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE) on Jan. 17 showed a high aptitude for technical-vocational courses, the Department of Education (DepEd) said yesterday.

"The results validate our decision to really put stress on our technical-vocational programs," Education Secretary Jesli Lapus told a news conference.

This year marks the first time that the NCAE was administered for graduating high school students.

The NCAE, Lapus said, is "not like the old National College Entrance Examination or NCEE which was used solely as basis for admission to college. The NCAE is a guide for students so that they will

DEPED/ A8

'Satur not covered by amnesty, he didn't apply'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana
and Leila B. Salaverria

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY SAID REP. Satur Ocampo was not covered by any amnesty proclamation because he had not applied for it—but the militant lawmaker made it clear he was not asking for any, in the first place.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the Bayan Muna party-list representative could have been spared of the murder charges he was now facing if only he had availed of the amnesty declarations made by former Presidents Corazon Aquino in 1987 and Fidel V. Ramos in the 1990s.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez agreed, saying that "if the President grants amnesty, you must apply." Gonzalez also said an application must be accompanied by an admission that one had committed a crime.

All that seemed academic.

In an interview with the INQUIRER yesterday, Ocampo said he never applied for amnesty because he had not committed any crime.

"I have squarely faced the charges against me. This is the third time that I am being accused of alleged crimes committed during the Marcos dictatorship," he said.

Ocampo, now detained at the Manila Police Department, is facing charges of multiple murder in a Leyte court for the alleged

SATUR/ A8

'The issue should not be Delgados vs Gonzalezes'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE MURDER OF A BUSINESSMAN ON March 10 is now pitting two prominent, wealthy families in a sad saga.

And the Gonzalez side of the tragedy that befell the Delgado-Gonzalez families is crying foul after some newspaper reports implicated one of its own in the cold-blooded killing of Federico "Rico" Chuidian Delgado.

The accusation shocked the Gonzalez family, and Louie's sister, Maria Rosario "Ruby" Gonzalez-Meyer, spoke to the INQUIRER on Monday night to denounce the newspaper report and categorically deny the involvement of her brother and family to the murder.

"We have kept our silence but today I must say they have gone too far. The truth must come out," she said.

"I am one with the Delgados in wanting to resolve this horrible murder. The issue should not be Delgados versus Gonzalezes. The issue here is there are two murderers who are at large and we are spinning our wheel with baseless accusations when my brother, who is trying to recover from a depression, has been dragged (into this crime) and he's not even here to defend himself," Ruby lamented, trying to fight back tears.

Delgado, son of shipping magnate Francisco "Paco" Delgado, was found dead in his apartment at the family-owned Mayflower Building on Leon Guinto Street in Malate, Manila. His woman companion reported two men attacked her and Delga-

THE ISSUE/ A17

JM GUIAO PUNZALAN

RUBY GONZALEZ-MEYER: We have kept our silence but today, they have gone too far.

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph Website: www.inquirer.net/nation
Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

EZ2 FOUR DIGIT
7 24 | 5 5 0 6
Mid-Day SUERTRES Evening
6 9 5 | 8 5 2
(All in exact order)
MEGALOTTO 6/45
2 4 19 20 21 30
P10,005,388.20

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. Mindanao and Eastern Visayas will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be cloudy with rainshowers.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/03/21/07 SOURCE PAGASA

GMA wants hunger over in 6 months

By Michael Lim Ubac

MALACAÑANG SAID IT would lower prices of some basic commodities by refilling the stocks of rolling stores and village pharmacies dubbed "Botika ng Masa" as part of an intensified drive to wipe out hunger in six months.

At his regular press briefing, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday that President Arroyo had ordered Antipoverty Commission chair Domingo Panganiban, Health Sec. Francisco Duque III and heads of other relevant departments to make a dent in the hunger and poverty level in the next six months.

The first quarter 2007 Social Weather Station (SWS) survey conducted from Feb. 24 to 27 showed that about a fifth of all families, or an estimated 3.4 million households nationwide, has experienced involuntary hunger at least once in the past three months.

The survey showed the problem of hunger worsened in Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon, and overall remained at the record-high 19 percent reached last November.

"President Arroyo ordered the review of all antipoverty programs," Ermita said, warning concerned officials to shape up or be ready to ship out after six months.

Ermita also warned the middle class against taking advantage of the rolling stores which are deployed in urban slums and poor barangays across the country.

Ermita said Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo has set a meeting on Tuesday with the national nutrition council, national antipoverty commission and the departments of agriculture and health "precisely on orders of President Arroyo to look closely at our antipoverty program."

"If within six months, the (number) of people that can't break away from the threshold of poverty hasn't changed at all, the antipoverty programs must be intensified," he said.

Malacañang earlier called on the public to cut down on texting, smoking, drinking and other luxuries to save money for basic needs.

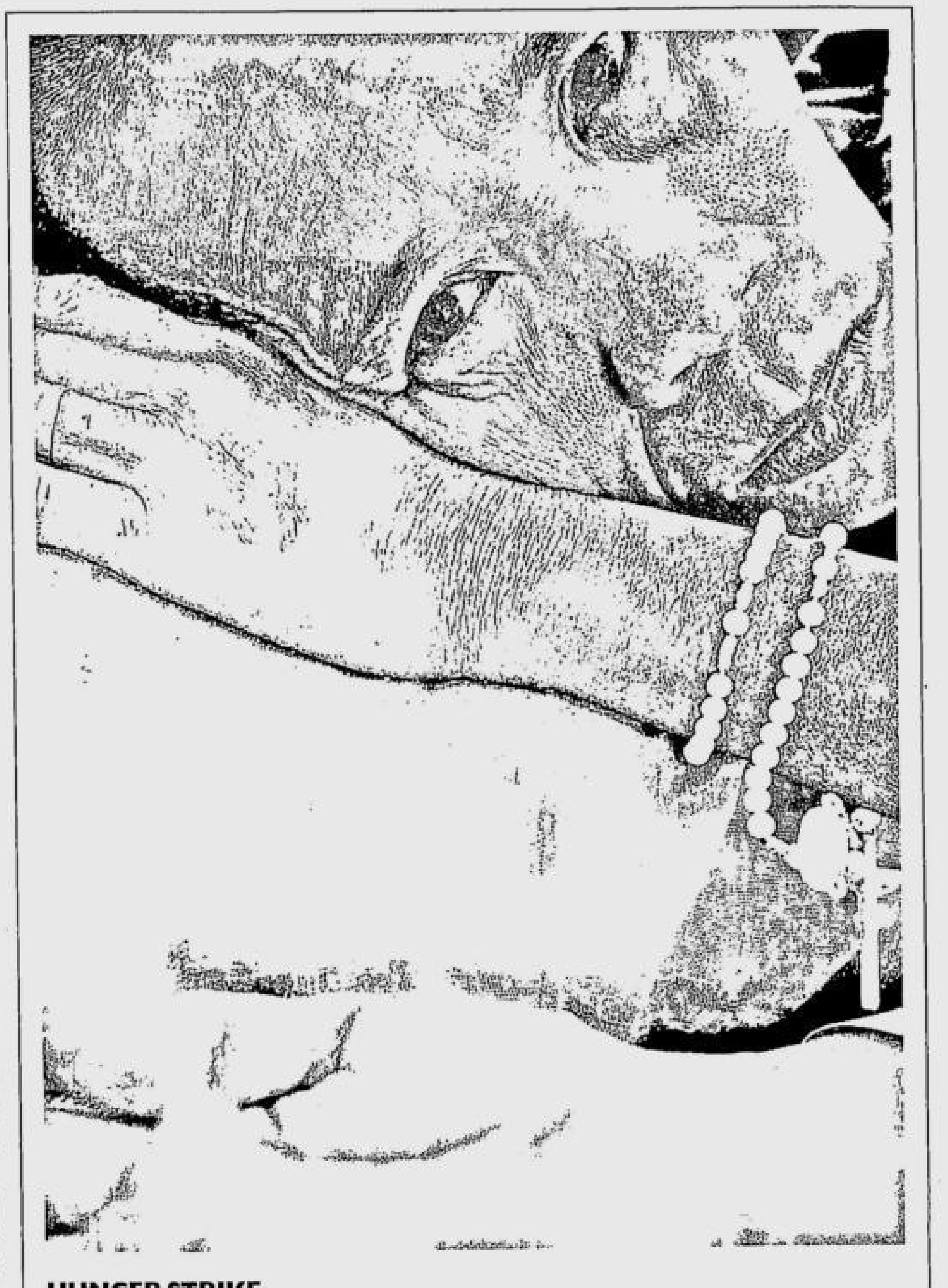
Meanwhile, an official spearheading the implementation of the government's Hunger Mitigation Program (HMP)blamed the opposition in the last Senate for their poor performance.

National Nutrition Council executive director Maria Bernardita Flores told the INQUIRER yesterday the implementation of the Food for School Program, a component of the HMP, had been suspended because of realignments and delays in the passage of the annual budget and the supplemental budget for 2007.

Flores said the Food for School Program benefited 292,227 public grade one and pre-school pupils and 123,311 day care pupils and their families from June-December 2006. Under the program, pupils get to bring home a kilo of rice every day.

But starting this year, the program had been halted. There is no rice to distribute. "Not only the students were affected, but also their families," Flores said.

Senate finance committee chair Franklin Drilon and vice chair Edgardo Angara had scrapped the P1.8 billion Food for School Program as a "scam" and just another ploy for "electioneering."



HUNGER STRIKE
Solidad Dalgaontes, one of the hunger-striking farmers from Negros, stares blankly after she was taken to the hospital on the 28th day of their fast. She and several other farmers have been on hunger strike in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform in Quezon City to dramatize their demand to be installed in the land awarded to them under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.
JOAN BONDOC

Chavit, Mike D deny bribe claim

By Cynthia D. Balana

TEAM UNITY SENATORIAL CANDIDATES Mike Defensor and Luis "Chavit" Singson yesterday denied having bribed a former beauty queen and her mother to file money laundering charges against detained president Joseph Estrada last year.

Defensor, however, admitted that he met Blanquita Pelaez at the Discovery Suites in Ortigas Center, Pasig City last year to discuss a different case.

He said he had been meeting with Blanquita, and even went to Los Angeles to see her and discuss "highly confidential" matters but stressed these were not related to the Estrada case.

Defensor said it was Blanquita who told him about her daughter Joelle's case against the former president.

"That is a personal case, one filed against UCPB. It's not a public case and it doesn't involve government funds. We have nothing to do with it," he added.

Joelle, a former beauty queen, had accused Estrada of using her bank account to launder large amounts of money in connivance with senior officials of San Miguel Corp. and United Coconut Planters Bank.

On Monday, the older Pelaez claimed that Defensor paid for her and daughter Joelle's round-trip plane tickets to the Philippines and even gave them shopping money after they agreed to file money laundering charges against Estrada.

Singson said Blanquita's sudden turnaround could be part of a planned set-up to destroy the administration and its Team Unity senatorial candidates.

Asked how Estrada could have used Joelle's account, Singson said Estrada courted the former beauty queen.

"*Ang partisipasyon ko lang diyan, sila ang lumapit sa akin* (My only participation is that they approached me)," he said, referring to the meeting wherein Pelaez and her daughter showed him evidence that Estrada used Joelle's bank account to launder money.

"*Alam ko niligawan iyan ni* Erap (What I know is that Erap courted her)," Singson said of Joelle. "*Gustong gusto niya iyan kaya nga binigyan ng* P2 million. *Kung ano man ang nangyari sa kanila iyan ang di ko na alam* (He wanted her very much so he gave her P2 million. But whatever happened between them I don't know)." *With a report from Leila B. Salaverria*

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DENR WARNING

Las Piñas ground water contaminated

By TJ Burgonio

ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY ANGELO Reyes yesterday banned the importation and use of Trichloroethylene (TCE) and advised Las Piñas residents against drinking from groundwater after the water from a former factory site in the city was found to be "potentially" contaminated with the chemical.

TCE, a chemical used in the production of polyvinyl chloride, flame retardants and insecticides and used as an industrial solvent, is a volatile compound that can cause cancer.

"We are making the announcement that the groundwater in Las Piñas is probably contaminated with TCE ... to alert the public. They should stop drinking groundwater. We don't believe in keeping bad news away from the public," Reyes said in a press briefing.

He also said that he was banning the importation, use and sale of the chemical. There are at least 20 local and foreign companies that import this chemical for the manufacture of electrical and electronic parts, footwear, textile, adhesives, among others.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources disclosed that Philips Corp. had conducted preliminary tests of the groundwater in its 33-hectare former factory site in Pamplona late last year, and found this "potentially contaminated" with TCE.

The electronics company, which shut down the factory in 1996 but now plans to develop the site with a local real estate firm, recently relayed the results of its tests to the DENR. As of now, the origin of the chemical has not been ascertained.

The DENR also took groundwater samples from the site, and had these tested by the CRL Labs in the former Clark Air Field in Pampanga, which in turn sent these to its affiliate in the United States. The department is still waiting for the results.

"It's better that we take pro-active stance, rather than be sorry later," Ely Ouano, director of the Environmental Management Bureau, said in an interview.

In the same briefing, Las Piñas City Mayor Imelda Aguilar said the city government had not received any report of ailments in the area.

Benjamin Reyes of Maynilad, the water company servicing Pamplona, said it would supply potable water to the residents comprising six families in the area.

"To the people in Las Piñas, rest assured we will provide potable water, enough water for the affected areas of Las Piñas," he said.

Philips representative Donough Foley, who flew in this week from Hong Kong, indicated that their company would "stand shoulder to shoulder with the government to resolve the issue."

"What should be highlighted here is that the environment is in bad shape. Our groundwater is possibly contaminated because of garbage being disposed irresponsibly. Our air is polluted. We have to take care of the environment," Reyes said.

Vindication, Palace says of CHR report

By Michael Lim Ubac

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY SAID IT FEELS vindicated by the results of the fact-finding inquiry of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) clearing retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan and other military men of complicity in most of the political killings blamed on state security forces.

Although Ermita had yet to be officially notified of the findings yesterday, he said that "it somehow proves" what the Palace had been saying all along that soldiers were not murderers.

"I'm glad such a clearance has been reported (by) a commissioner of a CHR," he said.

Ermita said the pronouncement came from an independent body such as the CHR, thus "let this be a sample for those who wish to level charge against anybody, especially those in government (and) against members of the armed forces and the police."

The findings of the Malacañang-created Melo Commission had named Palparan as the "prime suspect" in the killings.

Immigration vows probe of detainees' complaints

THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION yesterday promised to look into the complaints of some 159 foreign detainees at its three-building detention facility in Bicutan, Taguig City.

Though he denied that at least two detainees were on an already week-long hunger strike, jail warden Enrico Paner yesterday admitted many of the detainees have been complaining about their crowded cells, the lack of health personnel at the center and the snail-paced proceedings of their cases, including one case that has been pending for nine years.

Immigration officials reportedly held a meeting yesterday afternoon to talk about the problems in their detention facility which is reportedly the subject of various diplomatic notes to the government.

The German ambassador had personally visited the facility on Monday. A press spokesman later confirmed that one of its citizens was on a hunger strike and had complained of prison conditions.

Facility supervisor Henry Tubban also confirmed that the detainees had been alarmed by the death on Monday of Chinese national Li Cong Yen. A report showed to the INQUIRER indicated Yen complained of difficulty in breathing on Saturday afternoon. He was brought to the Ospital ng Makati where he died two days later, reportedly of a heart-related illness.

The detainees felt the victim had not been given proper medical attention after a fall that resulted in a leg fracture a few weeks ago.

Tubban said he rushed to the center Monday afternoon when he heard of agitations for a riot and held a dialogue with the inmates. He said they told him their concerns and he promised to try to address them. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

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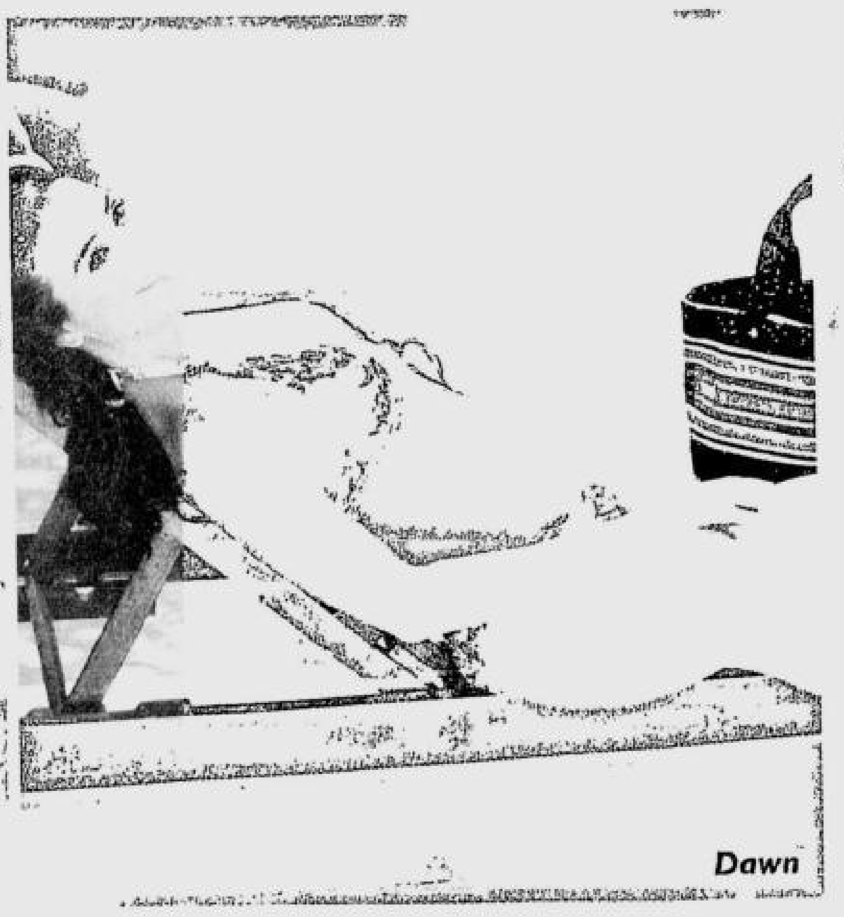
THE MARIE FRANCE BODY:

Lyn



Dawn

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marie france

Asia's GEM Manila 2007 SUPPLEMENT

<<< MESSAGES >>>

Congratulations to the Asia's GEM and Tourism Foundation, Inc. for another successful staging of the Asia's Gaming and Entertainment + Leisure Expo Manila.

The Asia's GEM 2007 presents the Philippines to the world as an ideal place for investments, particularly in tourism and gaming. In no time, we believe that our country will be recognized globally as a haven for both foreign travelers and investors alike.

The Conference likewise complements PAGCOR's efforts to change the lives of the Filipino people and help uplift the economy as it opens up opportunities for the creation of more jobs.

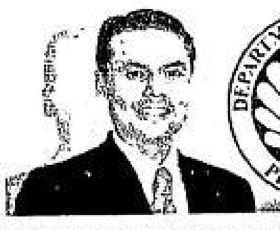
Gaming as an entertainment component is fast gaining acceptance in the international tourist market, and this event would certainly aid PAGCOR in the realization of its noble goals by attracting more foreign investors to the country.

The same as last year, this occasion provides various industry leaders the golden chance to exchange valuable ideas to further develop the synergy between tourism and gaming.

On behalf of PAGCOR, we doff our hats to the men and women who toiled to make the second staging of Asia's GEM a resounding success.

Mabuhay kayong lahat!

EFRAIM C. GENUINO
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, PAGCOR
Interim Chairman, Euro-Asian Cooperation Gaming



We take great pleasure in greeting the participants of the Asia's Gaming and Entertainment Plus Leisure Expo.

This year's exhibition brings together industry leaders, investors and entrepreneurs engaged in the gaming, entertainment and leisure business.

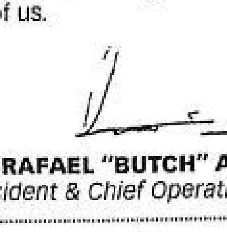
Gatherings of foreign and local visitors in events such as this support the Department of Tourism's efforts to promote the country as a center for Marketing, Incentives, Convention and Exhibition (MICE).

We welcome our guests to experience our culture and the arts, learn our history, admire our heritage destinations, behold our unique tropical landscapes, enjoy exciting nightfall activities, dwell in luxurious hotels and resorts and shop in bargain malls and town centers in one of the most beautiful mix of 7,107 islands in the Asia-Pacific region.

Our best wishes and congratulations to the organizers for a fruitful and auspicious event.

Mabuhay!

JOSEPH H. DURANO
Secretary, Department of Tourism



The year 2007 is when the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) looks forward to leading the way in Asia's casino gaming as PAGCOR's franchise is extended and its powers expanded.

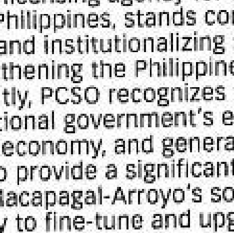
It is timely that the 2nd Asia's Gaming Expo Manila is bringing the local casino gaming industry to a new level in promoting tourism and more foreign investors to the country through the improvements the organizers have made in this year's show.

This is now our time to show the world that the Philippines is at par with the giants in the global gaming market.

I would like to extend by heartiest welcome and congratulations to the organizers and delegates for a very interesting conference ahead of us.

Mabuhay!

RAFAEL "BUTCH" A. FRANCISCO
President & Chief Operating Officer, PAGCOR



The Philippine Char-ity Sweepstakes Office joins Asia's GEM and PAGCOR in welcoming our foreign delegates as well as our local counterparts to this major international gaming tourism and entertainment exposition.

PCSO, the sole licensing agency for lottery and lottery operations in the Philippines, stands committed to doing its share in pursuing and institutionalizing strategic reforms essential in strengthening the Philippine gaming market.

More importantly, PCSO recognizes the vital role in supporting the national government's efforts to alleviate poverty, uplift the economy, and generate employment.

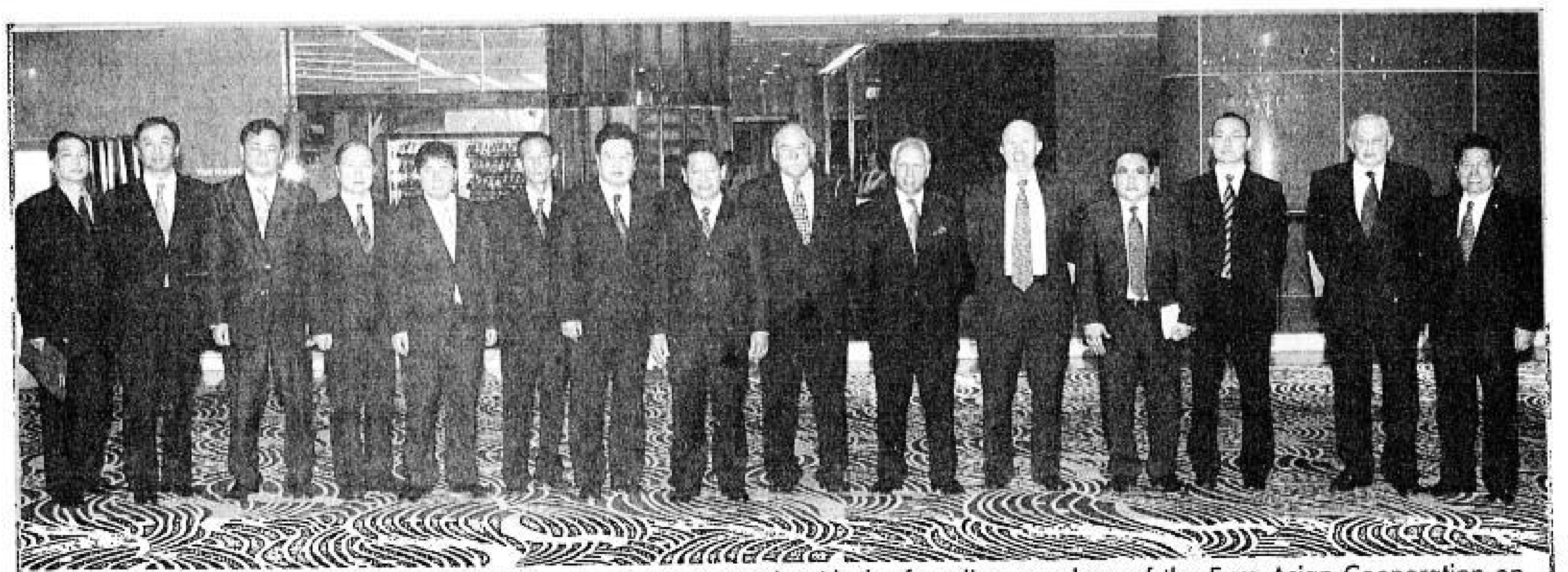
Our capacity to provide a significant contribution to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's social reform agenda rests on our ability to fine-tune and upgrade our lotto, sweepstakes, STL, and keno operations to meet world standards.

Asia's GEM provides PCSO with the venue for accessing global trends and the latest technology present in the move advanced gaming economies. It opens opportunities for acquiring fresh insights for integrating gaming and tourism – in the process, fast-tracking economic development while providing livelihood and employment for thousands of Filipinos.

We salute the organizers of the 2nd Asia's GEM for bringing together an impressive roster of luminaries composed of global investors and global market players.

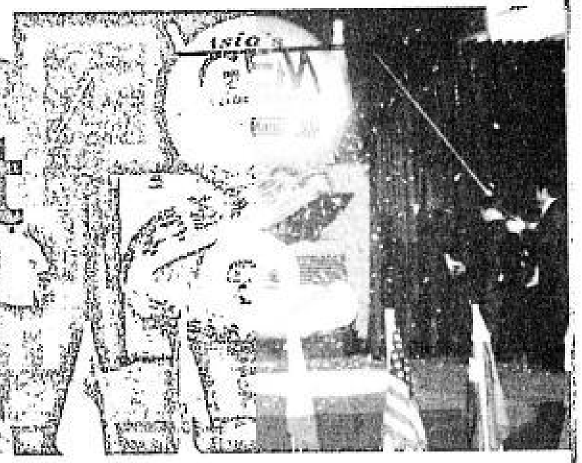
Our warmest congratulations to the 2nd Asia's GEM international gaming and entertainment exposition!

ROSARIO C. URIARTE
General Manager, PCSO



PAGCOR Chairman and CEO Efraim C. Genuino (center) stands with the founding members of the Euro-Asian Cooperation on Gaming, from left: Norman Ng (Jimei); Danny Ho (Sociedad De Jogos De Macau); Jack Lam (Phil. Travel And Amusement Ltd.); Yang Jin Seok (Grand Korea); Park Jung Sam (Grand Korea); Duk Shin Park (Parthenon, Inc.); Paulo Ho (MSPI); Tony Boyd (International Casino Services); Melvin Williamson (Club Hotel Loutraki); Jack Binion (Blizzard Asset Management); Upakit Pachariyangkun (Allure Casino Myanmar); Chiang Chiu Mo Samuel (Century Legend Holdings); David Orrick (Cirsa/Unidesa) and PAGCOR President and COO Rafael "Butch" Francisco.

Asia's Gaming & Entertainment + Leisure Expo Manila 2007



Exploring new avenues for growth and development

The Who's Who in international gaming, entertainment and tourism are in Manila for the next few days to participate in one of the biggest and most anticipated events this year – the Asia's Gaming and Entertainment + Leisure Expo Manila (Asia's GEM) 2007.

Presented by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) and the Euro-Asian Cooperation on Gaming (ECG), the event gathers under one roof casino operators, hotel chains, tourism destinations, integrated resorts, entertainment firms, investors, gaming equipment manufacturers and suppliers from around the world. It is organized by the Asian Gem and Tourism Foundation, Inc.

Only in its second year, the Asia's GEM has already established itself as a major player in the international gaming exhibitions market. It was conceptualized by PAGCOR Chairman and CEO Efraim C. Genuino who envisioned leveling the playing field in international gaming by offering small-, medium-sized and established gaming suppliers and manufacturers equal opportunities for business exchanges with casinos across five major continents.

"To be able to host an international event of this magnitude, in itself, is already a marvelous achievement. But to be able to build on what we accomplished last year and expand it further, is even more outstanding. That is why we are doubly proud to see this event unfolding again this year," said PAGCOR Chairman Genuino.

During its inaugural show last year, the Asia's GEM, drew the participation of 110 companies from various countries such as the Philippines, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Malaysia, Macau, the Netherlands, Slovenia, India, Taiwan, Ecuador, South Korea, Japan, Bulgaria, and Singapore. It welcomed more than 5,000 international and local trade visitors but this year, it hopes to double that number.

The first Asia's GEM was also a landmark occasion as it served as the catalyst for the creation of the Euro-Asian Cooperation on Gaming (ECG) Association, which gathers gaming industry leaders from Asia and Europe to foster greater cooperation and mutual support among casino operators, owners and investors.

The Asia's GEM 2007 further capitalizes on the synergy between gaming and tourism. The event's theme, "Forging Alliances – The Future of Global Gaming" permeates throughout the various components of the Expo-Conference.

The Expo, being held on March 22-23 at the World Trade Center, features the latest in gaming technology and equipment, gaming-related products and services, vacation clubs, golf clubs, popular and new destinations, and entertainment providers and venues.

Another coup scored by the Asia's GEM is its impressive line-up of international gaming luminaries who spoke during the Gaming and Investment Conference held yesterday at the Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila.

Among the speakers were Sociedade de Jogos de Macau Executive Director Dr Ambrose So, who has over 30 years experience in the casino business. He is also concurrently the executive director of Shun Tak Holdings and chairman of Macauport Ltd and Pier-16 Property Development Ltd.

Another speaker was Ritz London Chairman and CEO Andrew Love. He is also the chairman of the Casino Operators' Association, which is active in lobbying for new casino bills. Storm International Chairman and CEO Michael Boettcher, meanwhile, heads Russia's leading casino conglomeration, with over 5,000 employees and the top ranking in both table games and slot operations in the former Soviet Union.

On the other hand, Holland Casino Chairman and CEO Henk Kivits shared his insights on Compulsive Gambling. Holland Casino is operated and controlled by the Dutch government.

Rounding up the roster of speakers were WMS Gaming International Vice-president and Managing Director Sebastian Salat and Wynn Resorts Managing Director Jack Binion, who is also co-hosting the PAGCOR World Celebrity Charity Poker Tournament to be held at 7:30 p.m. today at the Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila.

"The caliber of speakers at the Congress is truly unprecedented. Though only in its second year, the Congress has already won the nod of approval of the movers and shakers of the international gaming industry. This remarkable feat cements the reputation of Asia's GEM as the Asia Pacific region's premier international gaming exposition and reinforces the fact that the future of gaming is in Asia," said Genuino.

However, the Asia's GEM is not just about casino gaming. Part of its objectives is the promotion of the Philippines as an ideal tourism and investment destination.

"Asia's GEM strives to uplift social conditions by attracting investments and providing job opportunities in the entertainment, international gaming and leisure sectors for Filipinos. Our goal is to develop new avenues for national growth, economic resurgence and social development," explained Celine Clemente, Asian GEM and Tourism Foundation, Inc. president and Asia's GEM chairperson.

PAGCOR banks on Entertainment City to make Philippine tourism globally competitive

From its unique geographical location to its natural wonders and warm, hospitable people – the Philippines has been considered by many as a dynamic, culturally-vibrant tourism hub in Asia.

And for a good reason too. With its scenic tourist spots – enriched by its colorful customs and traditions – Asia's Pearl of the Orient has become a "must-see" and "must-experience" destination for travelers and vacationers from around the world.

When it comes to thrills and excitement, however, the "glitz and the glamour" of the local casino gaming and entertainment industry is the country's most-compelling attraction. And pioneering its growth and development is the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (PAGCOR).

As early as 2001, PAGCOR Chairman and CEO Efraim C. Genuino envisioned transforming the state-run gaming firm into a "global corporation with a global mindset and a Filipino heart."

Taking the cue from Las Vegas and other gaming capitals of the world, where the entertainment industry takes precedence over casino gaming in terms of generating revenues, PAGCOR began to re-invent its casinos not only to provide premier gaming but world-class total entertainment as well.

Senator Richard Gordon and Chairman Genuino view the replica of the Entertainment City Manila.

"Gaming and tourism as a dual package has become an effective vehicle for promoting tourism and investments. This is why our corporation has undergone a paradigm shift from being a mere casino operator to a provider of world-class entertainment," Genuino said.

At present, the biggest step made by PAGCOR towards realizing this vision is the development of the proposed Entertainment City Manila project (Entertainment City).

The proposed Entertainment City, which is being unveiled to potential investors during the 2nd Asia's Gaming and Entertainment + Leisure Expo Manila (Asia's GEM) 2007 being held at the World Trade Center Manila from March 22-23, 2007, is a massive, fully-integrated entertainment and leisure complex offering wholesome fun, thrill and excitement for people of all ages.

Although, designed to be a global City of the Future, it will reflect the best of the natural charm, vibrant culture and warm hospitality of the Filipinos.

The Entertainment City is set to rise on prime reclaimed land between Roxas Boulevard and the panoramic Manila Bay. It is easily accessible from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), seaports, as well as the major commercial and urban centers.

It will be divided into specialized areas which will feature: five-star theme hotels; amusement parks; educational and cultural complexes; shopping malls; a commercial district; a sports stadium, restaurants; convention halls; state-of-the-art theaters; gaming centers; race tracks; residential villages; a hospital district; and other facilities at par with international standards.

Other highlights of the complex are various themed areas. One area will carry a Tropical theme featuring white sand beaches, lush mangroves and lagoons, all facing Manila Bay and its stunning sunset.

The second area will be a majestic Winter Park with large ice skating rinks, as well as real snow and skiing facilities. Clustered around this area are shopping malls, arcades and casinos, hotels and restaurants which will all carry the winter wonderland motif.

Meanwhile, a Marina Complex will also be built and will feature exciting facilities such as a walk-through glass tunnel showcasing the marine life of the Asia-Pacific region. Another important feature of this area is a fishport and seafood restaurant which is inspired by the concept of the Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco.

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A TALE OF TWO AQUINOS

Kris a better bet, says her Tita Tessie

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

TEAM UNITY SENATORIAL CANDIDATE TESSIE Aquino-Oreta would have gladly abandoned her senatorial bid if it was her niece, television host Kris Aquino, and not her nephew, Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino IV, who was running.

"If Kris wanted to run for senator, I will not run. She is super, super popular. Kris is at the height of her popularity. So why (should I run)?" said Oreta in an interview with the INQUIRER.

Despite her "colorful love life," "Kris will be a good politician if she pours her mind and soul into it," Oreta said.

"Kris is a super, super intelligent girl, do not underestimate her. She will be very, very good if she takes politics seriously," said Oreta. "She should have come out as a boy and she would have been her father's son."

Kris had previously announced her plan to run in the 2010 elections and she predicted she would win as senator.

Oreta was supposed to run under the United Opposition ticket being formed by jailed President Joseph Estrada. But Oreta was squeezed out of the merger of the opposition groups under the Genuine Opposition which adopted Aquino, a member of the Liberal Party-Drilon wing, as its candidate. Although Oreta and her nephew remained in good terms, it was obvious that the aunt was still smarting from the incident.

Oreta still remembered how her long-time friend, Estrada, could not say "straight out" that the merger of the opposition would mean only one Aquino would run in the common slate.

"He (Estrada) told me that Noynoy and I should talk. But I thought why do we have to talk when he could decide it for himself. So I told him (Estrada) that I'd make the decision easier for him and just leave," said Oreta.

Oreta related that she "nearly fainted" with what Aquino told her in one of their phone conversations. "When I told him to go to Tanay because Erap is the recognized opposition leader, he said 'No Tita, I don't want to be aligned with him,'" said Oreta. "In fairness, he (Aquino) is real. It is what he knows then, the poor guy was just relaying it to me."

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, March 22, 2007
4th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Ex 32:7-14
Gospel: John 5:31-47

Jesus said to the Jews, "If I bore witness to myself, my testimony would be worthless. But Another One is bearing witness to me and I know that his testimony is true when he bears witness to me. John also bore witness to the truth when you sent messengers to him, but I do not seek such human testimony; I recall this for you, so that you may be saved.

"John was a burning and shining lamp, and for a while you were willing to enjoy his light. But I have greater evidence than that of John—the works which the Father entrusted to me to carry out. The very works I do bear witness: the Father has sent me. Thus he who bears witness to me is the Father who sent me. You have never heard his voice and have never seen his likeness; then, as long as you do not believe his messenger, his word is not in you.

"You search in the Scriptures thinking that in them you will find life; yet Scripture bears witness to me. But you refuse to come to me, that you may live. I am not seeking human praise; but I have known that love of God is not within you, for I have come in my Father's name and you do not accept me. If another comes in his own name, you will accept him. As long as you seek praise from one another instead of seeking the glory coming from the only God, how can you believe?"

"Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father. Moses himself in whom you placed your hope, accuses you. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

Commentary

The people are depraved and turn to the worship of idols which they have made out of wealth and from what they have taken from Egypt, the place of bondage. But Moses pleads on their behalf, yet again asking God to remember all the goodness he has lavished on his people. And God relents! Jesus speaks of God, his Father, his relenting merciful God who is the Just One; and all that Jesus does is God's work in the world. Jesus is sent by God the Father, more surely than Moses was sent by God to the people. And Jesus harshly confronts the people, especially the leaders for their lack of obedience and refusal to listen to him. "His voice you've never heard, his form you have not seen, neither do you have his word abiding in your hearts, because you do not believe the one he has sent." Search the Scriptures—these are Jesus' words to us as well. Who do we set our hopes on—certainly it is often not Jesus or his word? Do we plead on behalf of others, and do we listen to God in Jesus? Or do we worship our own idols?

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Noynoy skips Marcos country

By Norman Bordadora

LAOAG CITY—TARLAC REP. BENIGNO Aquino III yesterday admitted shipping the Genuine Opposition's rally and sorties in this province, reputed to be the last stronghold of the family of his father's top tormentor, the late President Ferdinand Marcos.

Aquino said he had to turn down a request from the United Opposition's avowed leader deposed President Joseph Estrada, for him to attend the Laoag leg of GO's election campaign in northern Luzon.

Estrada had been instrumental in GO's last major rally outside Metro Manila when all GO candidates—except for the detained former officer Antonio Trillanes—gathered in Davao City weeks ago for a rally after he personally called each one of them.

"I explained to him that I'm not sure if what I have been saying all along in our campaign sorties will do us good in Laoag. I might just contribute to the divisiveness if I say those things," Aquino said in a telephone interview.

The platform of Aquino, son of the late Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr., and former President Corazon Aquino, is on truth and accountability for government officials.

In his campaign, Aquino says these are ideals that his father and mother fought for when they went against the Marcos dictatorship.

The Aquino family has blamed Marcos for Aquino assassination in 1983 and it was Corazon Aquino who had the Marcoses' alleged ill-gotten wealth seized by her Presidential Commission on Good Government.

"Going there is not something you will do without proper planning with our leaders (in the area). Sooner or later, I will have to go there to campaign," said Aquino who is now on his first national campaign after running for Congress to represent Tarlac thrice.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., son of the late dictator, said it will be best for all senatorial candidates, not just Aquino, to personally court the votes of Ilocanos.

"It will be best if they come here so they can tell the people directly what they plan to do for Ilocos Norte," Marcos told reporters.

Marcos Jr. said Ilocos Norte's leaders have yet to decide who to support among the senatorial candidates that include two from the Aquino clan-GO's Aquino and Team Unity's Tessie Aquino Oreta.

"The local campaign has yet to start," Bongbong said.

"The Marcos family does not dictate on who Ilocanos will vote for. There will be consultations among local leaders on who we will support for the Senate," he added.

Oreta earlier visited Laoag with a number of her fellow administration stalwarts.

Aquino said he has already been invited by staunch Marcos ally and now administration congressman Roque Ablan to campaign in Ilocos Norte.

Ablan is a classmate, even seatmate, of Noynoy's father at the University of the Philippines College of Law before the late senator left law school. Ablan and the older Aquino were also fraternity brothers in the Upsilon Sigma Phi. Marcos was also a member of the fraternity.

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Gov't teaches Islam in state schools

DURING A 2002 RAID AT A madrasa in Northern Luzon, security forces found a cache of assault rifles, crude bombs and training foxholes.

With a Muslim insurgency in the south, and memories of the World Trade Center attacks in New York still fresh, the discovery sent shock waves through the country.

Five years later, officials say the Philippines continues to face threats from Islamic militants, some of whom they say may have been "brainwashed" in local madrasas funded by Muslim organizations from the Middle East.

Now the government and some members of the Muslim community are trying to sideline the influence of militants by offering Islamic education to Muslim youth at state schools and setting a moderate Islamic curriculum for private madrasas to follow.

It's a vital step, say some security officials concerned the growing foreign influence in local madrasas may have a serious security impact on the country, facing active Muslim rebellion for nearly 40 years, including by one group with suspected links with al-Qaida.

"Only 8 percent of these madrasas are under the control of the government," Ricardo Blancaflor, defense undersecretary and former director of an antiterrorism task force, said.

"We don't want our madrasas to become factories for terrorists."

Islam reached the Philippines in the 13th century, about 200 years before Roman Catholicism was introduced by Spain in the late 1500s.

Radical Islam

According to the 2006 International Religious Freedom Report of the US State Department, there are an estimated 2,000 Islamic schools or madrasas in the country, more than half within Muslim communities in southern Mindanao.

Only 40 were registered with the education department.

About 1,200 are funded by foreign and local donors. Manila has no control over how the money is used.

"They are propagating radical Islam in the guise of freedom of religion," Victor Corpus, a former military intelligence chief who now lectures at an army war college in the United States, told Reuters. "It's like we're being fried in our own fat."

Corpus said nearly 300 madrasas in the country were getting funding from groups in Saudi Arabia that propagate the hardline Wahhabi form of Islam which has inspired al-Qaida leaders.

Changing mind-set

Some of the students at the madrasa raided in 2002 were among those apprehended for the worst militant attack in the Philippines, the February 2004 bombing of a ferry that killed more than 100 people near Manila Bay.

Mamaros Boransing, a Muslim educator and an undersecretary at the education department, denied that the madrasas were a training ground for terrorists.

"We're challenging that mindset and we're reforming our own madrasa system to promote a culture of peace and national unity."

Since 2005, the education department has introduced a new curriculum offering Arabic and Islamic studies to state schools in Muslim-dominated areas outside Mindanao, home to 3 million Muslims.

Nearly 1,000 privately run madrasas nationwide funded by the communities or by donations from abroad, have also been required to adapt to the state curriculum for Islamic studies.

Test run in Metro Manila

In Metro Manila, the government has started test runs for the new madrasa system in 37 state-run primary and secondary schools, where a majority of the pupils are Muslims.

"In the beginning, it was difficult to learn Arabic," Hamid Abdul, a 10-year-old beginner at Geronimo Santiago Elementary School near Malacañang. "I have to learn it to be able to read the Koran."

About 70 percent of 1,000 pupils at Hamid's school are Muslims and most of them have been attending weekend classes on Arabic and Islamic values.

"We're teaching only the basic to help them understand the language of the Koran," said an ustadz, one of 2,000 Islamic teachers trained by the education department. "Under our constitution, state schools are not allowed to teach religion."

Antiterror squeeze

More affluent Muslim families, including diplomats from some Islamic states with embassies in Manila, have been sending their children to privately run madrasas where Islamic religion is at the center of the curriculum.

Sherma Sappari's New Horizon Islamic School in Pasig City is popular for wealthy Muslim traders, diplomats and those who can afford to pay P25,000 to P50,000 annual tuition to attend.

"We've started to use local textbooks for our science, maths and reading classes, but most of our reading materials on Islam are still coming from the United States and Kuwait," she said, adding her school had helped developed Manila's new curriculum.

Like the state-run Islamic schools, Sappari said they shared the same challenges of meagre funds and lack of qualified teachers to push moderate Islamic education in the Philippines.

Banks extra strict

"After the 9/11 attack, local banks have become extra strict in the release of money sent to our school from supporters in Kuwait and other Middle East states," Sappari said, adding a new law on antimoney laundering further slowed inflows of funds.

"Even after thorough scrutiny of the donations, we've been made to wait for a few weeks to at least a month to get it."

Despite the odds, Boransing and Sappari said they would move on and push for a moderate Islamized teaching program for the Muslim minority in the Philippines.

"We don't really want our Muslim children to become virtual strangers in their own country, but, at the same time, we don't want them to grow ignorant of their culture and religion," said Boransing.

"We've just planted the seed of tolerance and understanding. This might end the fighting, promote peace and unite our country in the future." *Reuters*

Magsanoc, Tulfo, Bandera editors post bail

By Allison W. Lopez

WE SHOULD NOT BE COWED.

In a message to journalists, INQUIRER columnist Mon Tulfo said he hoped the media "will not be cowed" by the libel cases filed against them by Jose Miguel Arroyo, husband of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Just like [what] Gani Yambot [INQUIRER publisher], it's meant to have a chilling effect on media. I hope journalists are not cowed by Mike A's intimidation of the media. As far as I'm concerned I am not cowed," he said.

Tulfo posted P110,000 in cash bond at the Manila Regional Trial Court at 3:20 p.m. yesterday, for a total of 11 counts of libel for his articles which appeared in the INQUIRER and its sister tabloid Bandera.

The libel suits stemmed from several columns written by Tulfo in which he exposed the alleged smuggling activities of Vicky Toh and her brother. Toh had been romantically linked to Arroyo.

But unlike the INQUIRER publisher and seven editors who were detained for an hour at a police station in Pandacan the other day after they posted bail, Tulfo posted bail speedily and quietly and without media coverage.

INQUIRER editor in chief Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc was also able to post bail yesterday without a hitch.

Yambot and the INQUIRER editors were Tulfo's corespondents in the P22-million libel case filed by Arroyo last year.

'Unusual haste'

The issuance of the warrant of arrest by Judge Virgilio Alameda of the Manila RTC Branch 10 against Tulfo and the INQUIRER publisher and editors appeared to have been railroaded.

Yambot said he and the editors were surprised by the issuance of the warrant of arrest because they did not receive the notice of resolution of the court.

"There was unusual haste in this particular case," he said on Wednesday. "It was the first time the justice system worked so fast."

It usually takes five days to find "probable cause," said INQUIRER lawyer Fortunato Pagdanganan. "From what we gathered, when the resolution was released, the next day the warrant of arrest was issued," he said.

Sorry for dragging editors

Tulfo said it was a good thing he was not with Yambot and the editors yesterday. But he said he was "sorry for dragging the editors and the publisher into this."

Tulfo said he was a day late because he wanted to post bail for all his libel cases at the same time.

Before Tulfo arrived, Bandera's Beting Dolor (editor in chief), Lito Bautista (executive editor), Arlene Burgos (managing editor), Jimmy Alcantara (associate editor) and Raymond Rivera (circulation manager) posted bail without fanfare.

Bandera respondents

Burgos, one of the respondents in the Bandera libel case, said Bandera's publisher, Eileen Mangubat, failed to join the group because she was still working in Cebu.

Burgos said the Bandera staffers were also "caught unaware," and only learned that warrants for them were already out.

Tulfo assailed the harassment of media critical of the President's husband.

"It's the first time it happened to the INQUIRER. I've faced many libel cases even when I was with another paper," he said, referring to the detention of Yambot and the INQUIRER editors.

An INQUIRER security guard said that at 3:25 p.m. the other day, a certain Major Dacara of the Manila Police Department tried to serve the warrant at the INQUIRER editorial offices on Chino Roces Avenue in Makati. The respondents, however, were already at the Manila City Hall posting bail.

"It's the first time this [serving of warrant at the INQUIRER office] happened to me. Usually *nag-aantay sila* (They wait) for us to post bail," Tulfo said.

Iggy Arroyo's ex-wife…

From page A1

The lawmaker, the younger brother of First Gentleman Jose Miguel 'Mike' Arroyo, claimed ownership of the 'Jose Pidal' deposit accounts which Sen. Panfilo 'Ping' Lacson had exposed in a privilege speech as belonging to Mike Arroyo.

Joint custody

Alicia sought court protection a year after her husband left their Quezon City home and following the solon's request for joint parental custody for their daughter.

Alicia, former chair of the Philippine Stock Exchange, said the lawmaker left their home in La Vista Subdivision in Quezon City in 2006. In January this year, he filed a court petition seeking joint custody for their daughter.

$1-M insurance

The congressman's wife said she had to petition the court for protection because of the threat against her life. She said that she already secured a life insurance policy worth $1 million (P50 million).

In her counter-affidavit, Alicia said that ever since her husband got involved in politics and the "Jose Pidal" scandal, their life as a couple changed for the worse.

Womanizing

"From being a good man he changed, he had several mistress," said her lawyer, Lorna Kapunan.

The affidavit added that Arroyo seldom came home to his family and instead spent time gambling, drinking and womanizing.

"Keeper of many secrets."

Kapunan, meanwhile, described her client as the "keeper of many secrets." She said that serious repercussion could take place if something untoward happens to her client.

ABS-CBN News said it tried to get a comment from the congressman.

No basis

His lawyer, Perseveranda Abrenica, sent a text message to the TV network saying the petition filed by the congressman's wife has no basis.

Abrenica said her client only wants equal custodial rights for the daughter, adding that Alicia is merely diverting the public's attention away from the real issue of the petition for custody.

The Inquirer learned that the congressman is presently romantically linked to Grace Ibuna, the former live-in partner of actor Gabby Concepcion.

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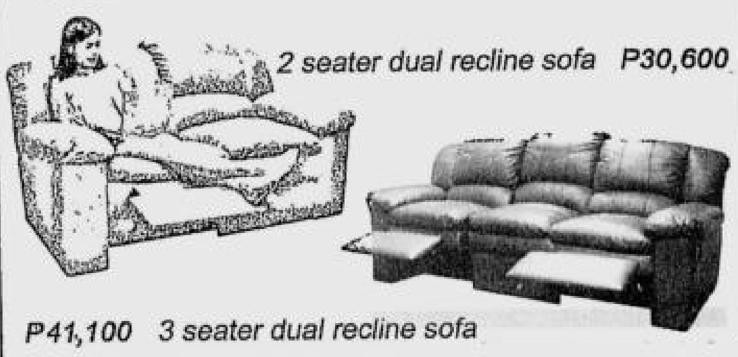

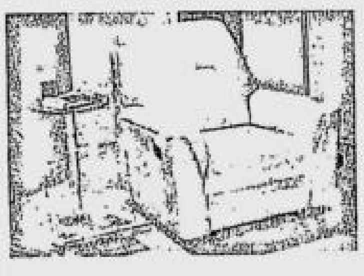

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ADVISORY

Numerous reports have reached the KAMPI Secretariat that unscrupulous persons posing as KAMPI recruiters and misrepresenting themselves with means to ensure the Party nominations for candidates to elective offices have been **demanding money** in exchange for the Party's nominations. KAMPI condemns these despicable practices and dissociates itself therefrom.

The public is advised that nominations are issued by KAMPI only upon a rigid screening process by the Party's Electoral Committee based upon their qualifications. **Party nominations have not been, are not and will not be issued monetary consideration.**

KAMPI will appreciate information concerning further activities of these unscrupulous individuals or group.

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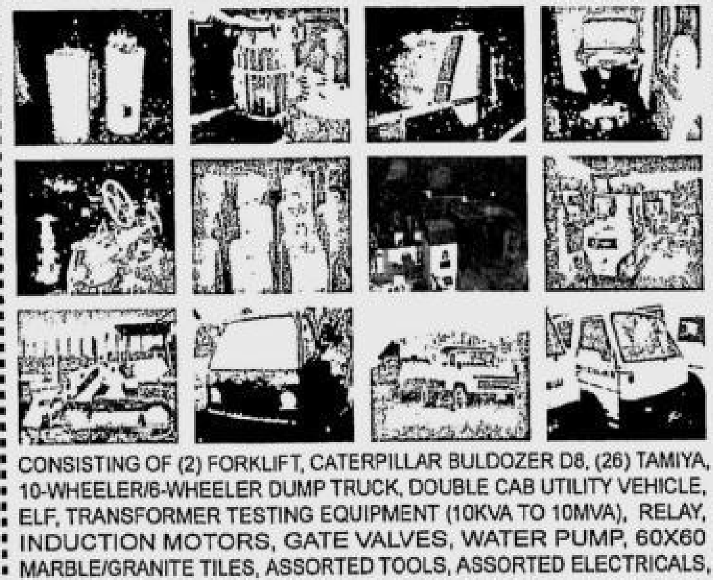

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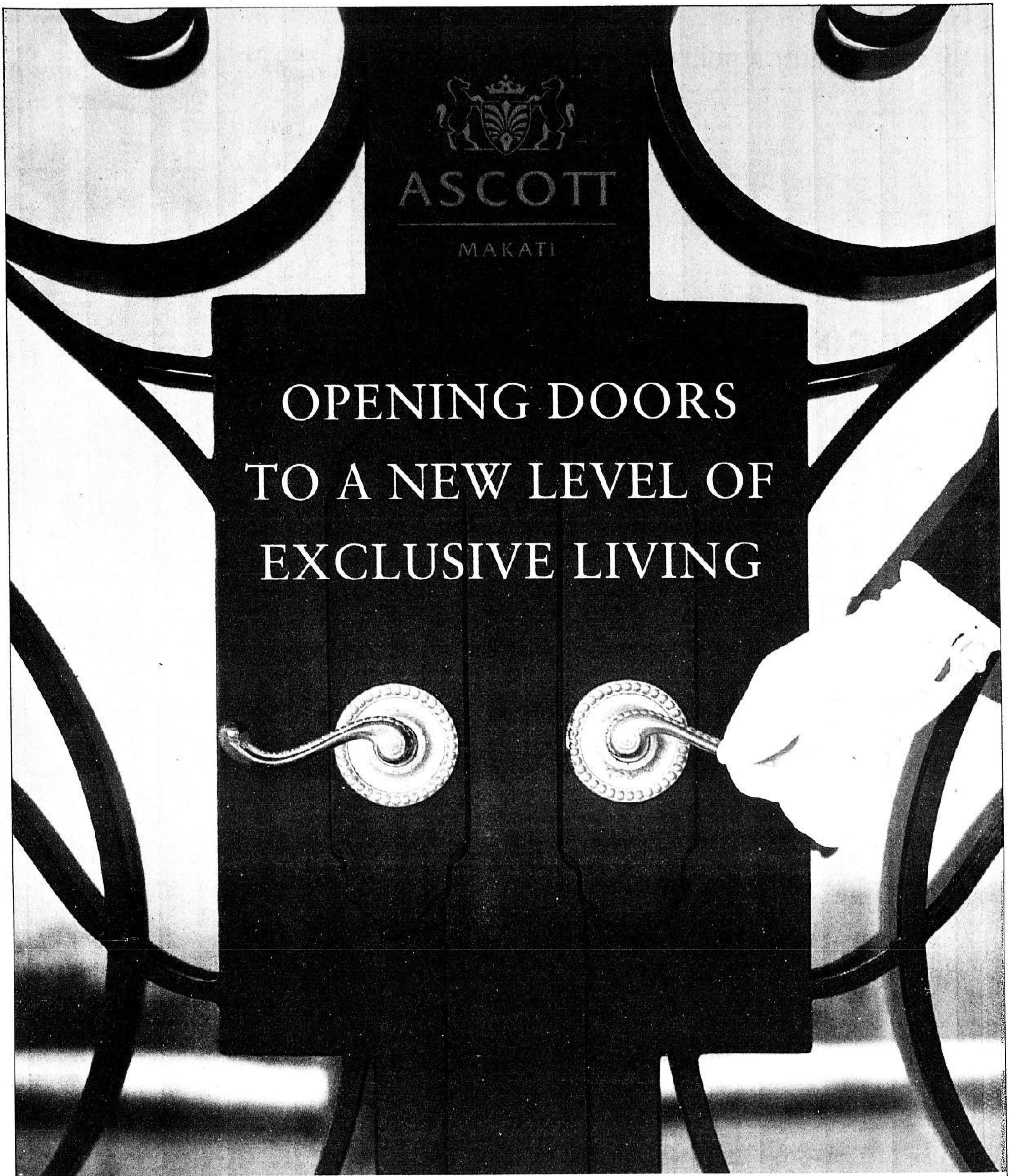

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Miriam: Is Satur a political offender or a terrorist?

IS REP. SATUR OCAMPO A POLITical offender or a terrorist.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said this was the crux of the multiple murder case filed against the Bayan Muna lawmaker over the alleged killings by communist rebels of suspected spies more than 20 years ago.

Some supporters of Ocampo say he cannot be charged in the case because he is covered by a proclamation issued by then President Corazon Aquino granting amnesty to rebels for offenses in pursuit of their political beliefs.

"The amnesty applied only to political offenders but today, a terrorist is no longer considered a political offender," Santiago said in a statement.

"While the defense will argue that Satur is a political offender, the military will argue that he is a terrorist who does not fall under any amnesty proclamation," said Santiago, a constitutional law expert.

'Terrorism an exception'

Senatorial bet Joker Arroyo has said that Ocampo should not have been arrested because he was already pardoned not only under the Aquino proclamation but also under an amnesty proclamation issued by former President Fidel V. Ramos.

Santiago said that under jurisprudence, "an offense does not have to have political character simply because it is politically motivated."

She said that while the Aquino proclamation exempted "crimes committed from purely personal motives, international law has added terrorism as another exception."

She noted that acts of terrorism were meant to intimidate a civilian population; influence government policy by intimidation; or affect the conduct of government by assassination.

20-year period won't apply

"When Ocampo escaped from jail in May 1985, terrorism under international law was already defined as any activity that involved a violent act dangerous to human life that is also a violation of Philippine criminal law," she said.

Santiago also said that since the military discovered only last August the Leyte mass grave supposedly containing the remains of the executed spies, "the 20-year period for filing the murder cases has not yet prescribed." *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

MEMBERS of the police SWAT team take their position on United Nations Avenue in Manila where militants protesting the arrest of Satur Ocampo were holding a rally. EDWIN BACASMAS

Satur not covered by amnesty ...

From page A1

killings by communist rebels of suspected spies during the 1980s. The case was filed after the military claimed to have discovered a mass grave in a Leyte village supposedly containing the skeletons of the victims of a communist purge.

Never proven guilty

Ocampo said he was charged with rebellion in a military tribunal during his nine years of detention under martial law, and again with murder, kidnapping and illegal possession of firearms from 1990 to 1992.

'I was never proven guilty'

"But I was never proven guilty ... Why should I apply (for amnesty)?"

Ocampo also stressed he was not invoking any amnesty proclamations in his pending petition with the Supreme Court challenging the legality of his arrest last week.

Another Bayan Muna official earlier expressed hope that the amnesty proclamation issued by Aquino could lead to Ocampo's release.

The 1987 proclamation granted "full and complete amnesty" to rebels for acts committed in pursuit of their political beliefs. The proclamation also said that those seeking amnesty should apply for it.

Ermita said Ocampo did not avail of any amnesty proclamation during the time of Presidents Aquino and Ramos, unlike former military rebels, such as former Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan.

"What I'm trying to say is, this case of Ka Satur should have fallen under this amnesty proclamation but he did not avail of that amnesty proclamation," he told reporters.

"Gringo (and his group) applied for amnesty and we accepted it. But Ka Satur did not apply ... so he is not covered," Ermita said.

"That's why that is the basis for his arrest, for a crime which has no prescription because it's mass murder," he also said.

Ermita raised the possibility that the Arroyo administration could issue an amnesty proclamation if there were people who wanted to avail of it.

"That could be a justification for another amnesty proclamation," he said.

Approved by Malacañang

Ermita confirmed the matter of whether Ocampo should be arrested was discussed in the Cabinet cluster on national security, which includes him.

"We were told that there is a warrant of arrest. So we said 'serve it,'" he said.

"The national security cluster of the Cabinet deals with policy and higher matters but since Satur is a high-profile person, we said, 'Let's just follow the law'... Other than that (we issued) no other guidance whatsoever."

'They put one over us'

Gonzalez lashed out at Ocampo's lawyers for not informing the government about their filing of a petition with Leyte Judge Ephrem Abando seeking court permission for Ocampo to stay in Manila for his hearing at the Supreme Court on Friday.

"*Naisahan niya nga kami diyan kasi* (He put one over us because) he sent his lawyer ahead of us," Gonzalez said. "They were already there [in Leyte], he was trying to negotiate with us here, so our prosecutor did not even know what was going on."

Gonzalez said that President Macapagal-Arroyo "sort of" scolded him because there were no prosecutors to answer Ocampo's lawyers.

The judge granted Ocampo's petition and the plane taking the congressman to Leyte for a hearing eventually turned back to Manila.

No media

"The lawyer [of Ocampo] must be disbarred ... That is very irregular of them ..." Gonzalez said.

Unlike in his first day of detention at the MPD, reporters have been barred by the police from seeing Ocampo.

"They were imposing restrictions on the media, I protest that," Ocampo told the INQUIRER. "That's a violation of my rights."

"He's campaigning already," Supt. Eduardo Sierra said, referring to the May elections, where Ocampo's Bayan Muna is running. "I'm not saying it's wrong, that's just an impression, he's indirectly campaigning."

A military spokesperson in Eastern Visayas called on Ocampo and communist rebels "to acknowledge the atrocities they have committed" in Leyte during the 1980s.

Capt. Mario Jose Chico of the 8th Infantry Division said Ocampo's statements that the Leyte mass grave was a hoax were "their propaganda line."

Witness

Virgilio Tanaid, a state witness against Ocampo, said the victims were rebels killed during "cleansing" conducted by the rebel leadership between 1984 up to 1986.

"I should know. I had a direct knowledge about the killing. I was part of the organization before," Tanaid, now a barangay chair of Caulisihan, claimed. *With reports from Tina G. Santos, PDI Research, and Joey A. Gabieta, Inquirer Visayas*

Free Satur, Hong Kong rights activists from 13 int'l groups demand

By Philip C. Tubeza

HONG KONG—SHAME ON ARroyo! Free Brother Ocampo!

This was the loud chant of around 30 human rights activists and migrant workers from different countries who picketed the Philippine Consulate General in Hong Kong yesterday to condemn the arrest of Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo and the extrajudicial killings in the Philippines.

The protesters included Hong Kong legislator Leung Kwok Hung, who said he would try to convince the city's Legislative Council to send a statement of concern to the Philippine government about the worsening human rights situation.

"I think (Ocampo's arrest is) ridiculous ... For democracy, human rights, for the interests of the working class, we cannot tolerate it," Leung said.

Leung, popularly known in Hong Kong as "Long Hair" for his uncut locks, said he met Ocampo during the protests against the World Trade Organization meeting in Hong Kong in December 2005.

"We were together to confront the harassment from the Hong Kong government ... and now I hear that he was arrested," Leung said.

From 13 countries

The protesters, who represented 13 international organizations, turned over to consulate officials a statement calling for Ocampo's immediate release.

"We are concerned why a 22-year-old case was resurrected during the campaign period at the time when Satur ... is heading the campaign of his party for reelection," it said.

Bruce Van Voorhis, a convenor of the Hong Kong Campaign for the Advancement of Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines, said the charges against Ocampo were "fabricated" and that his arrest had something to do with the May elections.

DepEd: Test for HS seniors shows ...

From page A1

really find a proper fit for themselves when they enter the job or entrepreneurial markets."

"This is part of our plan to equip our high school students with tech-voc skills that can empower them to find meaningful employment, whether or not they pursue college education," he said.

Lapus expressed confidence the NCAE "will be made a prerequisite for post-secondary studies by school year 2009-2010 with the passage of a law."

Of the 1,305,211 fourth year high school students from the country's public and private schools' who took the NCAE, 711,526, or 54.5 percent, had high aptitude for tech-voc programs while 468,901, or 35.9 percent, had moderate aptitude for the same subtest.

Only 49,066 students had high aptitude for college, Lapus said.

Results also showed that 22,267 students belonging to low income families were among the top performers in the General Scholastic Aptitude (GSA) subtest "with very high to excellent scores (98 to 99-plus percent)."

Lapus said 33,444 poor students also received very high scores in the tech-voc subtest.

Top placers

Mary Kristine Cate C. Quicho, of the Jose Rizal Institute in Orion, Bataan, topped the exams.

Other members of what Lapus calls "Club 99+," or those with test scores of more than 99 percent, were Francis Ramon B. Torres of the Theresian School of Cavite in Bacoor, Cavite; Hermelina N. Florida of Digos City National High School in Digos City, Davao del Norte; Renz M. Jader of the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City; and Charyljoy C. Navarez of the San Nicolas Academy in Mainit, Surigao del Norte.

The "top performing schools" (those with more than 400 examinees) were Taal National High School in Taal, Batangas, Ateneo de Manila University and Dolores National High School in Eastern Samar in that order, according to Lapus.

DepEd's tech-voc curriculum is aligned with the training regulations of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, or Tesda.

Test results will be used primarily for career guidance, Lapus emphasized.

Best tool to assess skills

The NCAE, he pointed out, is "by far the best tool our young graduates can use to properly assess their own skills and inclinations. And this will enable them to make more effective career decisions."

Lapus urged parents as well as tertiary schools to be "guided by NCAE scores so that our education system can become more rational and deliberate."

He said students "need to be given career counseling support and parents need to be informed and reeducated to appreciate viable alternatives to the college diploma."

Lapus reiterated the value of tech-voc in solving what he calls the "skills and jobs mismatch."

"Out of the 2.6 million unemployed Filipinos, around 1.1 million are college graduates. But at the same time, we have 650,000 tech-voc jobs available in the local market. However, we cannot fill in the vacancies because our tech-voc job applicants lack the required tech-voc skills."

Low GSA

"We expected the relatively low performance of students in the GSA since this is consistent with the results of the National Achievement Test. And we have been saying for so long the inability of government in the past to cope with the huge resource demands of a growing student population has placed us on a catch-up mode," he said.

The GSA subtest covers scientific ability (40 items), reading comprehension (60 items), verbal ability (60 items) and mathematical ability (60 items).

This part of the NCAE is similar to the old NCEE (although NCEE did not include scientific ability in the test), DepEd said.

Tech-voc aptitude covers manipulative skills and clerical abilities of students while entrepreneurial skills (30 items) involves students' capacity to engage in business undertakings.

School guidance counselors have been trained by the department to assist high school seniors in interpreting their NCAE scores.

Malacañang rejects ...

From page A1

mate income."

- "A penalty, even if reduced, so that he will have a criminal record."
- "Absolute disqualification" from reassuming any public position, even if the settlement comes through.

"*Malabo* (It's not feasible)," Villa-Ignacio said of the proposition. "How could you offer [only] P20 million? We might send a signal different from what we want [if we accept it]."

Ligot was the predecessor of former AFP comptroller Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia, who is himself charged with plunder and perjury for allegedly amassing more than P300 million in ill-gotten wealth.

Ligot's compromise offer was filed only hours after the Sandiganbayan sentenced Charlie "Atong" Ang, a former gambling buddy of ousted President Joseph Estrada, to a maximum of six years for bribery.

The reduced sentence was handed down after Ang offered to return P25 million he got from commissions in the tobacco excise tax, a plea bargain deal that enabled him to avoid a possible life sentence.

'Atong Ang formula'

According to former Solicitor General Frank Chavez, any public officer accused of a crime should not invoke the "Atong Ang formula" to get off the hook.

Chavez, the founder of the antigraft advocacy group Operation Clean Hands (OCH), yesterday expressed strong opposition to Ligot's compromise offer.

"The law should be followed and the guilty ones should be meted out justice. They cannot utilize any Atong Ang template to get a way out of a wrongdoing," Chavez said in a phone interview.

The cases filed against Ligot before the antigraft court stemmed from the P67-million plunder case filed by the OCH before the Ombudsman on April 15, 2005, said Chavez.

The OCH, composed of volunteer lawyers, was launched in 2002 to serve as a watchdog against corruption in the judiciary.

An investigation by the Ombudsman for the Military had found Ligot, his wife Erlinda, children Paulo, Riza and Miguel, brother-in-law Edgardo Yambao, and sister Miguela Paragas liable for unexplained wealth under Republic Act No. 1379 (Forfeiture Act).

"We are opposing any offer of settlement. On the civil aspect, maybe [it's possible], but [they should be] made answerable to the criminal liability," Chavez said.

He said the OCH had complete documents to back the charges that Ligot and his family were facing.

"Acceptance of the offer will only emaciate the power and the majesty of law," Chavez said.

The OCH, one of the main complainants in the graft cases against the Ligots, is preparing to submit an opposition to the compromise offer before the Office of the Special Prosecutor within the week.

A copy of the opposition will be furnished the Sandiganbayan Fourth Division, which is hearing Ligot's case.

Defense, AFP mum

Defense Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane said it was up to the Sandiganbayan to accept or reject Ligot's offer.

Asked whether he thought the proposition was acceptable, Ebdane said he was "not in a position" to comment either way.

Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro, the AFP information chief, said the military had "no hand" in the move made by Ligot and referred reporters to the latter's lawyers, Antonio Zulueta and Rafael Zialcita, for comment.

"The AFP will not comment on actions being undertaken by Ligot's lawyers because he is already retired from the military," Bacarro said.

He also said it would be "inappropriate" for the military to comment on Ligot's actions.

Ligot's compromise offer was addressed to Villa-Ignacio, Deputy Special Prosecutor Robert Kallos and acting Deputy Special Prosecutor Humphrey Monteroso.

Ligot offered assets including used vehicles and real estate in the Philippines and in the United States.

But Ligot's lawyers said the offer was only for purposes of amicable settlement and "should not be taken as an admission of any liability of our clients and cannot be used as evidence against them." *Reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana, Volt Contreras, Jocelyn R. Uy and Christine O. Avendaño*

Pinoys cautioned vs eating endangered species

From page A1

three of many dishes served in local and international restaurants using endangered species.

"There is an old conservation adage: Someone will always pay a fortune to eat the last of an endangered species," the WWF said in a statement.

But it added that with the organization at the forefront, "we can be sure that someone will always be here to stand guard."

The WWF pointed out that if the recent poaching incidents by Chinese fishermen at the Tubbataha Reef had resulted in anything, it was the "public furor over the blatant consumption of endangered species, like the Napoleon wrasse."

It said that upon realizing that the wrasse (locally called "mameng") was endangered, concerned citizens reported those restaurants in Manila that carried the fish on their menus. Two Japanese restaurants in the Makati Central Business District serving whale meat were also reported.

The WWF promptly appealed to these establishments to desist.

Quick to act

According to the WWF, Portico 1771 and North Park were the first restaurants to scrap mameng from their menus, and Tsukiji and Sushi Tsumura quickly followed suit by pulling out their whale dishes.

The WWF commended these restaurants for "acting responsibly and decisively."

But it said a number of well-known restaurant chains were still offering protected species like mameng: "WWF is appealing to these businesses to stop serving all threatened and endangered animals—organisms at risk of becoming extinct because they are either too few in number or are threatened by changing environmental or predation factors.

"The slaughter and sale of these animals is not only unethical but also downright illegal under a host of local and international laws."

Endangered list

WWF said giant groupers, dwarf pygmy gobies, whale sharks, basking and zebra sharks, big-eye and blue-fin tuna, giant manta rays, sea turtles and numerous whale and dolphin species were among the species being illegally sold as food.

"With restaurants still serving endangered species with impunity, we should not be surprised that barely one percent of Philippine reefs remain in pristine condition," it said.

But with 40 million Filipinos depending on the sea for sustenance, it said, "the issue is not wildlife conservation [but] food."

The WWF cited Republic Act No. 9147 (Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act), which limits the collection of all threatened wildlife to scientific, breeding or propagation purposes (Section 23), and prohibits the killing of any endangered animal unless it is for a religious or indigenous tribal ritual, self-defense, or the animal is afflicted with an incurable and communicable disease (Section 27).

As a signatory of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Philippines is also bound by an agreement to regulate trade in all species, the WWF said.

Unless special permits are issued by a governing body such as the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources or the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, all trade in endangered species, including consumption and sale, is prohibited, it said.

SC upholds acquittal of drug suspect, scolds cops

By Leila B. Salaverria

WITH A STERN WARNING TO LAW ENforcers to respect the rights of people they are arresting, the Supreme Court upheld the acquittal of a Hong Kong national arrested without a warrant in Manila allegedly for possessing more than 29 kilos of shabu or metamphetamine hydrocloride, an illegal drug.

In affirming an earlier ruling of a Manila regional trial court, the high tribunal said the warrantless arrest of businessman Lawrence Wang in 1996, as well as the subsequent warantless search of his car was illegal.

The court said the arresting officers led by Sr. Insp. Lucio Margallo of the Public Assistance and Reaction Against Crime unit of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) could not claim that it was an "inflagrante delicto" arrest because the suspect was not committing any overt crime but was simply crossing the street when nabbed by police in Malate on May 17, 1996.

"It is simply not allowed in free society to violate a law to enforce another, especially if the law violated is the Constitution itself," the high court said in its March 16 decision.

"Those who are supposed to enforce the law are not justified in disregarding the rights of the individual in the name of order. Order is too high a price for the loss of liberty," the high court said in its March 16 decision.

Quoting the late American Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, the high court said "it is less evil that some criminals should escape than that the government should play an ignoble part."

Outrightly dismissible

The Court also faulted the government for seeking the wrong remedy when it filed a petition contesting Wang's acquittal by Manila RTC Judge Perfecto Laguio based on a question of law. In its petition, the government said the RTC erred in declaring Wang's arrest and search illegal because he (Wang) had agreed to the search and thereby waiving his right against unconstitutional search and seizure.

"For being the wrong remedy taken by petitioner People of the Philippines in this case, this petition is outrightly dismissible. The Court cannot reverse the assailed dismissal order of the trial court by appeal without violating private respondent's right against double jeopardy," it said.

But it added that even if it admits the government's appeal, the petition would still be dismissed based on its merits.

The high court junked the government's claim that Wang had waived his rights against unreasonable search and seizure, saying the evidence showed otherwise. Passive conformity under intimidating or coercive circumstances is no consent at all, the court said.

Police had arrested Wang following the arrest of two of his employees at the Glamour Modeling Agency for selling shabu. The two did not disclose their source of shabu, but named Wang as their employer.

Police later approached Wang as he came out of his apartment, then proceeded to frisk him and search his car. They reportedly found the shabu, two unlicensed firearms, P650,000 cash and an electronic mechanical scale. He was charged with drug possession, illegal possession of firearms, and violation of the Comelec gun ban before the Manila RTC.

In court, Wang argued that there were no valid arrest and search warrants and the evidence against him were inadmissible.

The Manila RTC later granted his "demurrer to evidence," effectively acquitting him of the charges.

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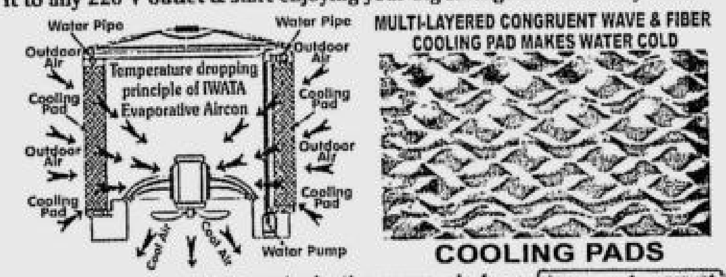
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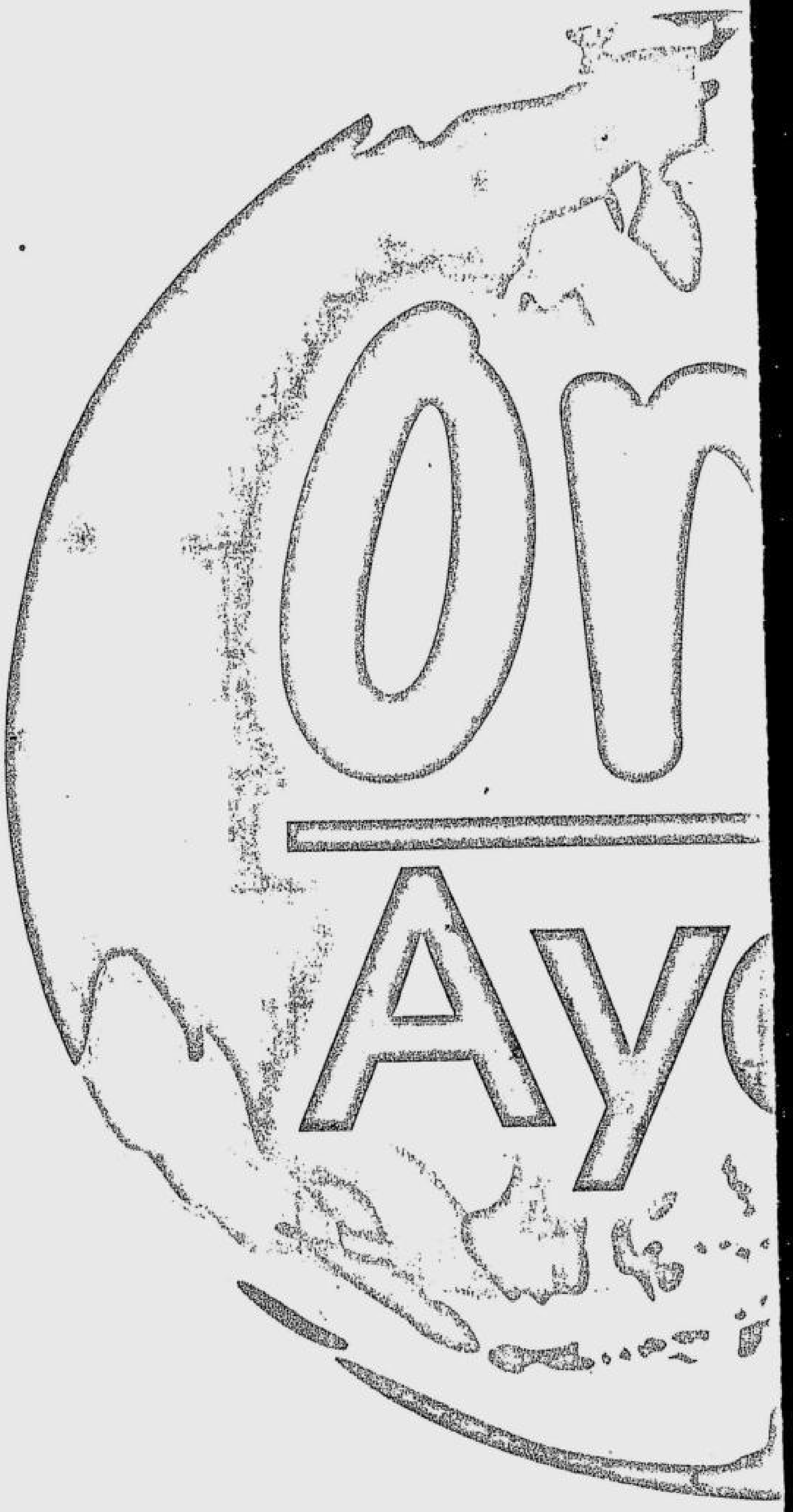

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ISSN 0116-2642
INQUIRER
Vol. 22 No. 104
Email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph Website: www.inquirer.net/opinion
OPINION
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THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.
•Subscription Hotline 896-6000

Harassment

EDITORIAL

LAST TUESDAY, THE LONG ARM OF THE PRESIdent's husband, Mike Arroyo, again reached into one of the country's newsrooms. His intervention had the effect of leaving many of the seats at the news desk empty for several hours. We know this because, sadly, it happened in ours.

Arroyo had sued a columnist, our publisher, and eight of our editors for Ramon Tulfo's columns on alleged smuggling by Vicky Toh, allegedly Arroyo's former lover. On Tuesday, eight of the accused posted bail of P50,000 each at police station 10 in Pandacan, Manila. However, they were detained for about an hour after posting bail, until a release order arrived.

After their release, publisher Isagani Yambot noted that out of 100-odd libel cases filed against the INQUIRER since its founding, Arroyo's suit was the first to require the detention of INQUIRER staff even **after** they had posted bail.

Even police officials could not conceal the true nature of the libel suit from themselves. A police officer who declined to be named said it best: "It's a clear case of media harassment." He had reason to request anonymity: it is the President's husband he is implicating.

Another police officer told some of the accused editors, during their unusual albeit temporary detention, that the case was in fact truly unlike others, because of who the complainant was. Again, he was referring to the President's husband.

Another officer said there was pressure from "higher-ups" to transfer the editors to the Manila Police District headquarters and detain them there instead.

In the scale of acts of injustice committed by the State, Tuesday's unusual procedure does not rank high. It is simple harassment, something we are not unused to, and something we expected from the President's husband. But viewed from a higher perspective—that is, in the context of Arroyo's unprecedented barrage of libel suits, which many journalists consider an insidious assault on press freedom—the twist in this particular libel case assumes a more sinister shape. Through us, Arroyo is sending a message to all journalists, especially those who do not have the benefit of available counsel or ready cash or media attention.

What is that message? That he can use the justice system to make life difficult for all of us.

Arroyo is a lawyer, and he must know that the chances that the Supreme Court will overturn half a century's worth of jurisprudence and declare him not a public figure are as slim as, well, his harassment of journalists will earn him (to use his own language) points in heaven.

Already, one regional trial court has ruled this month that Arroyo is in fact a public figure, by virtue of his high-profile marriage to the President. That means that the standards he must meet, to win his libel cases, are much steeper. We cannot imagine that other courts, already used to a legal tradition that recognizes the transformative power of publicity and celebrity, will reach a different conclusion about Arroyo's status.

Arroyo must know that too, if he was paying attention in law school, and despite the supercilious condescension of his main libel lawyer—so the question is: Why does he do it?

Because he is taking undue advantage of the slow, deliberative pace of the courts. In this, he has adopted the exact same legal strategy of his wife's administration: The administration's best lawyers knew the Supreme Court would strike down the extraordinary presidential initiatives at the center of controversy last year—the calibrated preemptive response policy, Presidential Proclamation 1017, and so on—and yet the administration went ahead anyway. Why? Because between the launch of the initiative and the effectivity of an adverse Supreme Court ruling, the administration would have time, sometimes as much as several months, to wreak legal havoc.

Mike Arroyo follows the exact same template. He uses his undeniable influence in the corridors of the executive, and perhaps even in some of the hallways of the judiciary, to make life difficult for journalists who ask tough questions or who paint him in unflattering light. Ask Mia Gonzales, the Malacañang reporter whom police officers tried to arrest right inside the Palace; ask the 45 journalists Arroyo has sued for various imagined offenses; ask the editors who "voluntarily surrendered" but found themselves unaccountably detained. The name of Arroyo's game, which we believe the courts will declare invalid in time, is plain, vengeful harassment.

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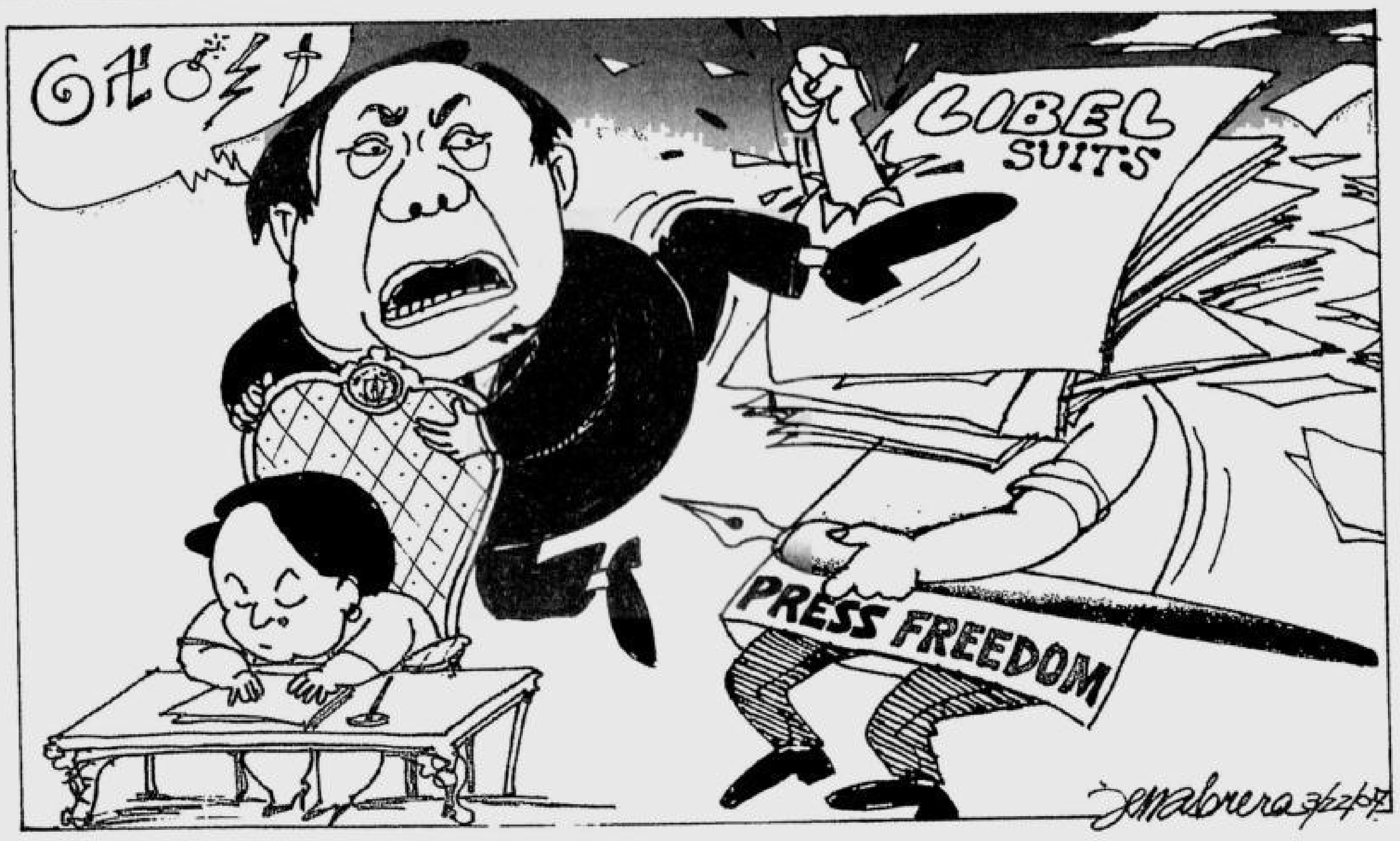

Midgets, Lilliputians and 3-year-olds

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

ILOILO CITY—ON SURFACE, THERE'S LITTLE to distinguish this 56 square-kilometer capital from 117 other cities. Today's election campaign has banged all of them tone-deaf. Local headlines swirl around the sister-versus-brother contest for San Joaquin town's mayorship, provincial capitol's tug-of-war and the opposition's rally that fizzled.

Traffic-clogged roads, poverty, waste and flood control problems are obvious. But they blur Iloilo's innovative mechanism for regional development that—as Asian Development Bank says—could be a model for South and Southeast Asian countries.

Over 10 years, citizens and officials of the local governments in Oton, Pavia, Leganes, San Miguel and Iloilo crafted a metropolitan development council that provides a coherent mechanism for long-term growth. "Iloilo learned not to fast-track metropolitanization," says the ADB in a new study: "Urbanization and Stability in Asia." Each municipality "has a distinct area of specialization"—so unlike Cebu where Mayor Tomas Osmeña rankles other leaders into fury.

The Iloilo model, Naga City's transparent citizen participation, and Bacolod's buttressing of its local tax base are vital models, the bank adds. Today, 52 out of every 100 Filipinos cluster in urban areas. Population add-ons and migration will swell the number of urban residents to 85 million by 2030.

Streams of people head for Manila and Cebu, plus Davao, the spill-over provinces of Laguna and Cavite, plus secondary cities like Iloilo and Bacolod. In these cities, industries, trade and service sectors thrive, backed by schools, transport and other infrastructure.

In 1991, there were already 60 cities, many of dubious viability. There are 118 today. This pell-mell multiplication "strained the national government's ability to finance such local government units," the World Bank and ADB note.

> In 1991, there were already 60 cities, many of dubious viability. There are 118 today

"The small size ... prevents them from generating their own resources."

Negros Occidental has a glut of 13 cities. Aside from Bacolod, these are: Bago, Cadiz, Escalante, Himamaylan, Kabankalan, La Carlota, Sagay, San Carlos, Silay, Sipalay, Talisay and Victorias. Most of these are "jokes," says a Negrense friend.

Himamaylan, for example, is a "city" of three large barangays, on or near the national highway. But the place doesn't even have an urban center. Sipalay has 31,515 voters—a fifth of Cabanatuan's voting population of 156,407. And Esclante's 44,052 electors are dwarfed by Iloilo's 365,820 voters.

Many failed to generate levies by taxing idle land, businesses, etc. Thus, the share of locally raised taxes shriveled: from 31 centavos out of every peso in the mid-1980s, to only 20 centavos today—and it is still shrinking. They're propped up by doles, especially by IRAs (internal revenue allotments) from the national government.

IRAs are not linked to performance. And, like all unconditional grants, they invariably sap accountability. Far too much goes to salaries. Midsalip in Zamboanga del Sur is a fifth-class municipality. But its officials pay themselves city-level salaries from IRA doles.

Little is invested for programs. The 20 percent "Development Fund" is meant for unmet human needs: nutrition, water, primary health care, etc. Most treat it as a mini-pork barrel. Thus, shell cities rarely become "engines of growth."

Flawed bills for 16 more cities will lapse into law without the President's signature come April. These include: Bogo and Carcar (Cebu), Baybay (Leyte), Catbalogan (Samar), Lamitan (Basilan), Tandag (Surigao del Sur); Batac (Ilocos Norte); Bayugan (Agusan del Sur), Cabadbaran (Agusan del Norte) and Borongan (Eastern Samar).

Most have been "exempted" from meeting the P100-million threshold of locally generated income set by Republic Act 9009. Don't expect the Marcoses to dip into Lichtenstein foundations to prop up Batac's tresasury. IRAs for poverty-strapped Muslim provinces and fifth-class towns will be clipped.

"If these municipalities cannot even manage to meet the basic income requirement (set by Republic Act 9009) how can they be expected to perform and deliver as cities?" asks Iloilo Mayor Jerry Treñas who heads the League of Cities. "The vested interests of a few are the only ingredients needed to derail a rational and sensible law."

As writer Gunter Grass says: these cities resemble "three year olds, the gnome, the Tom Thumb, the Lilliputian, the midget, no one could persuade to grow."

* * *

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What's that matter with the opposition?

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I CANNOT FOR THE LIFE OF ME UNDERstand why the opposition candidates haven't pounced on two things that have fallen on their laps from heaven, the way a desert wanderer does water in an oasis. They've done it individually, but not as a group—as disparate people asking the voters to consider them as individuals who can do a better job, and not as the voice of an outraged nation demanding an end to the iniquity as a matter of moral necessity.

The two things I refer to are the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy classifying the Philippines as the most corrupt country in all of Asia, and the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing condemning the extrajudicial killings in the Philippines and laying the blame for them on government.

The implications of the first are enormous. For one, it refutes the ground for the dismissal, or attempted dismissal, of local elected officials, such as Peewee Trinidad and Jejomar Binay respectively, which is corruption. A government deemed corrupt by a reputable international organization has no business decreeing who is corrupt and who is not, and using fascist methods to enforce its decree. Well, to begin with, a government deemed illegitimate by its own constituents has no business removing elected officials from office on the ground of corruption, the theft of the vote being the most rapacious act of thievery there is. Indeed, a government deemed epically corrupt by a fairly incorruptible international organization—although Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo says mind-bogglingly that body has been corrupted by the opposition—should be removed by the people for being so by the same logic.

Frankly, I don't know why the elected local officials who have been victimized in this way have not yet banded together to file a case against GMA and her cabal, notably Ronaldo Puno who masterminded their ouster. On the strength of evidence of corruption from an impartial source. Or since a case like that is not likely to prosper in GMA's courts, at least to hold a People's Trial in Plaza Miranda to hammer home the point. You can't have a more supreme court than Plaza Miranda. If you can prove your case there, you can prove it anywhere.

For another, the PERC finding refutes government's much-touted economic recovery. The finding bursts the balloon and supplies a forceful explanation of why GMA cannot answer the most basic question about it, which is: Why do the people remain sick? Corruption prevents them from recovering. No, more than corruption, absolute pillage. You cannot be the most corrupt country in the continent that invented corruption without unleashing a scale of thievery that turns national wealth into private loot. I've said again and again: Runaway growth in only one part of the body is not called progress, it is called cancer. That is what we have, in all its malignant fury.

The implications of the killings are equally enormous. Joker Arroyo says we shouldn't generalize and blame the entire AFP for it. Well, who's generalizing and blaming the entire AFP for it? I for one am not blaming the perfectly decent officers of the AFP for it. How can I? They're in jail. Lest we forget, the only two living Medal of Honor recipients have been thrown there for refusing to acknowledge a President who wasn't voted so. I lay the blame for the killings squarely on the Garci generals and their boss. They're the ones who, as in Marcos' time, have unleashed a policy of crushing protest and dissent under the guise of fighting insurgency. They're the ones who ought to be the object of another class suit for wholesale murder after they have been brought down from power, or better still brought to the World Court to answer for crimes against humanity.

At the very least what these two things do, or should do, are remind the opposition candidates of the one monumental edge they have in these elections which they haven't capitalized on. Indeed, which they seem to have forgotten completely along the way. That is that GMA is the issue in these elections. In the same way that Ferdinand Marcos was the issue in the 1971 senatorial elections in the Philippines and George W. Bush was the issue in the American senatorial elections last year. Which was the reason the opposition swept Marcos' protégés off the map and the Democrats pummeled Bush's legions in both houses of the US Congress. Our now dubious distinction as the most corrupt country in Asia and the second most dangerous country for journalists after Iraq drives home the point that the only question that needs to be answered in these elections is: Do you want more of this?

Why the opposition, as a group, as a collectivity, as a coalition has not harped on this fact—well, GMA's longevity doesn't really owe to her brilliance, it owes to her enemies' lack of it.

But far more than that, what these two things do, or should do, is remind the opposition that these issues go beyond elections and go to the heart of national survival. Corruption and repression, kleptocracy and murder, were the two things to which this country said "*Tama na, sobra na, palitan na*" 21 years ago. They were the two things that convinced the Reagan administration in particular that Marcos was not part of the solution, he was the sole problem. What made the opposition larger than life in the Philippine elections of 1971 and the US elections last year was that it spoke for something beyond the elections themselves, or beyond a mere choice of leaders for the voters. It spoke for an end to grinding oppression. It spoke for choosing life over death.

People who are opposed to others, simply because others are in power and they are not, are not called opposition. They are called envious.

All in a morning's work

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

LEFTIST PARTY-LIST REP. SATUR OCAMPO hogged the headlines in the past few days, with his arrest allegedly for masterminding the murder of 15 people in Leyte, whose mass graves reportedly were discovered by the military last year. He was front-page news after policemen bodily carried him into a van and then into a private plane as he refused to be transported to Leyte, for a personal appearance before the judge who had ordered his arrest, as required by court rules. His followers loudly protested against this manhandling of Ocampo but, doubtless, they were also counting on the sympathy votes that the news generated for their party-list. For pure theatrics, few can match the Left.

* * *

We've all heard of mass graves for decades now, such as those discovered in the late '80s in Laguna. The talk then was, those graves contained the remains of NPA members who were "purged" on suspicion of their being government spies. Even then, Ocampo's name surfaced in connection with those mass graves.

Now there are the mass graves in Leyte, and the military has decided to pin Ocampo down on this matter—stupidly on the eve of the elections. The truth about those mass graves and Ocampo's involvement may be forever buried because of the bad timing and his media theatrics.

* * *

On the very day that Ocampo's photo was splashed on the front pages of newspapers, I was helping the Alay sa Kawal (ASK) Foundation chair, Ambassador to London Edgardo Espiritu, distribute cash checks to about 30 widows and parents of ordinary soldiers killed in combat with elements of the New People's Army during the first quarter of 2007. We also awarded a number of soldiers who were permanently discharged from service due to combat-sustained serious injuries. ASK's checks for P30,000 to the widows and parents are a paltry sum, but they are the private citizens' way of recognizing the heroism of their loved ones in defending the country. Invariably, the widows—most of them in their early or mid-20s, with two or three young children—would weep as the trustees offered words of condolences. The question in our minds was, how will these young women, often just high school graduates, raise their children?

* * *

Media have protested the handling of Satur Ocampo by the police in the 3 a.m. transfer to the airport. But I found myself also being sucked in emotionally, as always during such occasion, coming out drained over the senselessness of the awarding ceremonies we trustees of ASK have been presiding over since its founding in August 1987. Since that date, ASK has given out P30.3 million in cash assistance to 4,258 families of fallen soldiers and to the several hundred permanently incapacitated soldiers. But that's nothing compared to their "victimization" in a senseless war that should have ceased long ago.

I personally campaigned for Ocampo and his colleagues when they first ran for Congress, arguing that we should welcome them in the parliamentary struggle. I argued that they could serve as the much-needed conscience of the often insensitive elite bloc that dominates Congress. But sadly, over the years I saw little evidence that the leftists in the House, except for a few, have truly severed their links with the NPA, which kills and maims soldiers. Whenever the NPA rebels blow up communication towers or buses, or extort revolutionary taxes, few leftist voices in Congress are heard condemning them. Hence the confusion over their sympathies and their generic labeling as communists.

* * *

Citizens' groups in Cebu are up in arms over what now appears to be "grossly overpriced" lampposts and streetlights that were installed in Metro Cebu for the Asean Summit last January. One such group is the church-based Dilaab Foundation Inc. whose subsidiary movement, called Barug Pilipino, seeks to promote "corruption-intolerance." A statement issued by Fr. Carmelo O. Diola, Dilaab's "overall coordinating steward," said that "instead of the pride we shared for the summit's success, we are now faced with shame for all the corruption that has taken place." He noted that from an alleged actual all-in price of one lamppost of P33,000, it became P83,000 each in Cebu City, P224,000 in Mandaue City and P325,916 each in Lapu-Lapu City. Stressing that "Payment for these items comes from the hard-earned money of ordinary taxpayers," Diola said "[w]e must hold government accountable inasmuch as they are stewards of the people's money and answerable to us, the vigilant citizens of Cebu."

Stressing the belief that "there are still more honest than dishonest people in this country," but that "sadly, many honest ones have succumbed to the slavery of passivity and silence," Dilaab seeks the support of citizens in making the lamppost issue as well as the entire gamut of corruption "PUBLIC and DETESTABLE." "We need to raise one collective voice, a VOICE that expresses disgust over CORRUPTION, a VOICE that says WE ARE WATCHING YOU." Barug Pilipino can be reached at barugpilipino@yahoo.com or cell phone number 09209020323 or fax number (032)4169073.

* * *

Sadly the issue of the "grossly overpriced" lampposts seems to be the fly in the ointment in an affair that reaped praises from our Asean neighbors. It reminds me of what happened to the Centennial celebration of Philippine independence in the last year of the Ramos administration, when accusations flew thick and fast about some grossly overpriced projects in the Centennial area in Clark Freeport. In that latter case, one of the project contractors backed out and, in the rush to finish the job, some corners might have been cut by unscrupulous characters. It seems to be a truism that when grand projects of many millions of pesos are rushed up, accounting becomes very loose and those with a quick eye for fast bucks swoop down.

Heart in two places

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

"WHEN WE WERE ASKED TO STAND UP, RAISE our right hand, and pledge to 'renounce' our loyalties to our old country, I felt a giant lump in my throat and I had to struggle not to cry. By the time they sang the national anthem, they had already lost me."

That paragraph, though emotionally charged, sounds prosaic when compared with the rest of the essays in Gemma Nemenzo's gem of a book, "Heart in Two Places: An Immigrant's Journey" (Anvil). The moment she describes is a watershed moment for most Filipinos who have left their homeland to strike it out in the U.S. of A. But its impact and significance for a variety of Filipinos could be as varied as the Filipinos themselves and their reasons for living there.

Gemma writes about that pledging experience in her first essay aptly titled "Citizen Cain" (double entendre there), one of the 53 essays in her book.

A little backgrounder: Gemma is one of the Women Writers in Media Now (WOMEN), a bold group we formed in the early 1980s to fight the military's strong-arm tactics against women in media. She was a free-lance writer for print and a scriptwriter for TV's "Batibot." Today, we're still the same clutch of irreverent women meeting regularly, and Gemma's book launching was another chance to laugh, eat, reminisce and tell stories. Our sisterhood has survived revolutions, coups, marital break-ups, change of governments, jobs, homes and citizenships.

Among us, it was Gemma who bravely took on the distant horizon. 1988 it was, after her marriage ended. With three children (aged 10, 8 and 9 months) in tow, she forged ahead to strike out anew in San Francisco.

That last sentence begs for a "never to return" cliché ending, but that's not the case with Gemma. She has come home again and again. And when one reads "Heart in Two Places," one realizes that she has not really left. She left her heart in the Philippines. She also has a heart beating to the beat of San Francisco which she calls home ... at least for now.

The 53 essays are grouped into six categories-- "Assimilation Angst," "The Mommy Track," "Friends and Lovers," "The Philippines is in the Heart," "Middle-Age Spread," and "Politics is Personal." The engaging, heart-tugging pieces (reminiscences, reflections, ruminations and humor) were published in Filipinas, the only monthly glossy magazine for the Filipino-American community circulated in all US states. Gemma is managing editor and columnist of Filipinas which has been around for about 15 years now.

The categories suggest how Immigrant Gemma journeyed from here to there, through a landscape that is both familiar and strange, starting off with loads of the homeland in her heart, in her mind, on her back. Who was she, where was she, why was she ... in this journey?

Gemma gives a voice and face to an immigrant's painful dilemmas and exhilarating discoveries. She speaks for those who may not have the gift of words. Those who are not immigrants will find pearls of truth about themselves, their relationships, their own view of the world.

Gemma writes as a keen observer of what's happening around her and, more importantly, inside her. She writes not as a dilettante but as one deeply engaged. Her style—simple, conversational and yet profound—are so down-home, with just the right *timpla*, like the hometown flavors she craves for.

But the great surprise is the foreword by her head-strong daughter Jaja Nemenzo Almendral, now all grown-up, who describes her internal journey with her mother. My mother, my self. "Her words were mirrors from which I could see life through her eyes, and the view, rather than staring off into the distance and over our shoulders, was actually looking at us." A wow piece, if you ask me. Haunting.

But Gemma should take us herself through her own journey.

In "Citizen Cain" she writes: "I held Maia's hand tight as we pushed our way through the crowd. 'That was so exciting, Mama!' Maia enthused. She was already planning her presentation in class the next day on how her Mama became an American.

"At the restaurant where we celebrated, I gulped down the iced tea, hoping that the constriction in my throat would go away. It didn't, but my emotions were no longer as raw. Nothing will change, this is just a piece of paper."

From "Love, Patience and Renewal": "When Maia was nine months old (Carlo was 10 and Jaja, 8), we left the country to start life anew in a foreign land. It was a move that sprung not just from failure but more so from defiance. The odds were against us: a single mother and three-small children didn't stand much of a chance if you believe the statistics. True enough, it had not been easy but we have steered our way out of the fog. And in so doing, I was able to give back to my children what they have taught me: love, patience and renewal in exchange for strength and endurance."

From "The Big Night": "What's a Filipino mother to do when her upbringing and experience clash with the prevailing mores of America in the nineties? In addition to my anxiety over my daughter's safety and the quality of my parenting, I was struggling with my own immaturity. As a mother, I was concerned about her date's driving. But as a post-adolescent forty-five-year-old, I wondered if he was cute."

From "May, Come She Will": "Yet when May comes around, I always find myself looking back with fondness to the *fiestas* in our home town, and the other home towns I've been to, knowing deep in my heart that when the time comes for me to embrace a quiet life, those are the places I will return to and finally call my home."

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

Generation gap

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IF YOU'RE READING THIS COLUMN IN THE newspaper, your average age, market research indicates, is 55 years old. If you're reading this online, chances are you're a bit younger, within the 20- to 40-year-old age range (so let's say, you're in your early- or mid-30s) who has given up on buying newspapers and prefers to read news on the Internet. The average INQUIRER newspaper reader then, was born around 1952; the average online reader, anywhere between 1967 and 1987 but, more likely, in the 1970s.

Official statistics tell us that our population, broken down by age, is divided in this manner: 35 percent, 0 to 14 years old; 61 percent, 15 to 64 years old; and only 4 percent, 65 years old, or older. But let's look at something particularly interesting. The median age of our population, according to government statistics, is 22.5 years, with men tending to be younger (the median age for men is 22) than women (their median age is 23). This means half of our population is below 23 years old. Put another way, over half your countrymen and women were born around 1984, which means their earliest political memories would be of the 1989 coup attempts.

Still, chances are, if you're in the habit of following the news through the papers, you're older than half of our population; and whether you're in your mid-30s or mid-50s (and still belong to the biggest chunk of our population, age-wise), you comprise only about 11 percent of that larger whole. These slim figures suggest something to me.

First of all, if you pick up the paper, you belong to a culture that takes political involvement for granted, and which views discussing national issues as a matter of course. And your assumptions are shared by the writers whose works you read. In a sense, you and I assume certain things, and among those things are: politics is interesting, it's relevant, it's a cause for concern, it's a worthy use of our mental resources and a realm for engaging our emotions.

Second, if we belong to a culture of political involvement, we also share a common set of experiences, which began with the end of the Magsaysay era, including the confrontations of the First Quarter Storm. We lived through the transformation of martial law from New Society to failed tyranny; then thrilled the world with Edsa I, and disappointed it with Edsa II. While there is a big difference between Filipinos who remember what it was like before martial law, and those, like me, who can only remember as far back as its early years, I still think people born from the '50s to the '70s have more in common with each other in their political attitudes than those whose first real political memories are of Edsa II, which quickly proved to be a disappointment.

Third, this means a shared history leads to a stronger sense of commitment; without it, political involvement is just a fad and becomes irrelevant—the reason the young at Edsa II have tuned out.

Fourth, let me put it to you that you and I, as writers and readers of the Opinion section, view society in a larger, more inclusive sense, than Filipinos belonging to the median age group. Just the other day, I was asked some questions by MassCom students from UP. They also asked me for my opinions on show-biz personalities entering politics. I told them we have to view our political culture as part of our larger culture, and that politics is as susceptible to fads as any other aspect of our culture. In the 1950s the barrier between politics and entertainment was broken when an actor was elected senator; it took almost another 50 years more before an actor became president. But what was a long-term development quickly became a fad but it's a fad that's peaked.

If politics is fundamentally communication, then the manner in which we communicate changes over time. The *balagtasan*, we forget, was established as a form of entertainment in the 1930s. The *balagtasan* as a poetic joust was attractive to a particular generation of Filipinos, and it isn't very different from the manner by which politicians compete for the attention of the public: Diosdado Macapagal secured his first electoral success as a candidate who literally campaigned by means of the poetic joust; and our politicians from the 1930s to 1970s competed to outshine each other in the more formal realm of the stump or privilege speech. But the public moved on, which accounts for why fresher means of communication offered by actors and media people have gone over better than the tired, old rhetoric of traditional politicians.

And so, the mass culture you and I adhere to may be waning. The younger you are, the greater the chances you have tastes—in music, fashion—different from those of your peers. The era of the matinee idol—e.g., FPJ, or a band, like the Beatles—holding sway over millions of people is gone: there are many smaller groups—so many that no one can make it quite as big. Great political movements demand conformity—in opinion, action and commitment. But then, the younger you are, the more idiosyncratic you want to be.

The ability of anyone—politician, journalist, preacher—to sway others has been radically reduced. Which may not be entirely a bad thing. Or a good thing. But it explains, to my mind, why Filipinos of a certain generation—the generation that includes, incidentally, you, the INQUIRER reader—can care so deeply (in a sense, labor so mightily) and share certain fundamental attitudes that half of the population may never really feel. It's a generation gap. Different language, different styles, an entirely different world view: one in reference to the defining event for many generations, the martial law dictatorship, can't evoke any feelings deeper than a shrug.

Post-grad adventures

NOW THAT GRADUATION IS NEAR AND A NEW BATCH of fresh graduates are about to try their luck in the country's job market, let me share my almost-a-year, post-graduation experience looking for a job.

My last months in the University of the Philippines were very tense: all kinds of final reports, a thesis, org activities, not to mention the series of exams that I had to go through before acquiring that precious UP diploma—my passport to the professional world. I survived all of those and even graduated with honors—something which I was really proud of and which gave me the belief that I was among the "highly in demand" graduates of the country. But I was wrong!

YOUNG BLOOD

Andrew Agunod Jr.

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

Job offers didn't come on silver platters. My *kayabangan*—which, by the way, is typical to some students of the premiere state university—got the better of me. I didn't go "prospecting" for a job months before graduation. I held on to the belief and confidence that companies would be competing among themselves to hire me once they knew I was a UP graduate. But to my dismay, I found out that the State University seemed to ring a bell no more.

In fairness—to me and to my alma mater—my unemployment is more of a "product" of circumstances than incompetence. (Here goes the *kayabangan* again.) The one and only job I applied for (way back in April last year yet) was in a research institute in UP Manila. I expected to be immediately hired because I thought my prospective bosses would have no reason to doubt about my competence, plus "potentials." After all, I was a UP graduate.

But UP, as any other government institution, is a multi-layered bureaucracy. I was summoned to a first interview in June. The second took place the following month. But then my appointment had to be approved by the UP president, but it was not expected to come soon. Months later, maybe. When exactly, even the people processing my documents could not be certain. Applicants accepted in May get to start working only in the following December, I found out.

So in July, I considered another job elsewhere, albeit alien to the course I finished. Molecular biology and biotechnology graduates in the Philippines (there are only around 30 graduates each year and only from UP) usually end up in the academe (either teaching or doing research), or in medical schools and graduate schools here and abroad. Since I didn't like to teach and didn't have plans of studying again (still got to earn!) and I did not want to go to medical school either (I have had enough of headaches!), my only option was to go into research. But pursuing such a career in a Third World country is not at all financially rewarding—not to mention the perpetual process of applying for the job (certificate of eligibility, medical exams, computer exams, two month-long interviews; by the time you start working, your first salary is not even enough to cover all that you spent for all these and your bills!). Thus, I didn't have any choice but to "cross into another field" and see what was in store for me in the corporate world.

No, it's not that I'm leaving science mainly because of money. Molecular biology had been very exciting for me. I never thought that I would be doing the same stuff scientists did in TV shows I watched when I was a kid. Biotechnology, cloning and immunology, PCR and other interesting topics: only a privileged few—in a country like ours—are given the chance to learn these in lectures and experiments that often involve very expensive gadgets and reagents. I also had excellent company around: the best professors and the brightest "block mates" (we have four summa cum laude awardees in our batch!). Taking the course taught me discipline.

But back in high school, economics was my most favorite subject; science came only second. But my nerdy habit of watching Discovery Channel and National Geographic, enhanced my penchant for science—specifically molecular biology and medicine—while my interest in things that had to do with business and economics eventually fizzled out in the face of an exciting scientific revolution that sees no end until now.

Hence, my decision to abandon my dream of becoming a scientist somehow seeks to fulfill a "long-lost" wish. Nevertheless, I still highly admire Filipino scientists sacrificing so much to advance science and research in the country despite tremendous odds. Indeed, to be competitive, the Philippines needs a robust R & D program. Yet, Filipino scientists and researchers, many of whom are known for their significant contribution to science, remain the most underpaid professionals in the country. I met many of them in UP but, aware as I am of the fact that they are given so little recognition, if at all, by a society too preoccupied with other concerns (valid or not), I can't help feeling sorry for them. I hope that the government and the Filipino people will soon realize their value and importance, otherwise more and more Filipino talents, ingenuity, resources, (including opportunities to excel in the international arena) will be lost.

My decision to "change course" brought me to an entirely different world. After several interviews, I finally was accepted as a "management trainee" for a bank. The job was great! It was like getting paid high for studying accounting (how I love this subject!), general banking laws, personnel supervision and bank products and services. However, in the middle of my training, I realized that the kind of tasks I was being groomed for—operations and branch work—was not to my liking. So I quit. My decision did not mean that I didn't like banking or that I hated routine tasks. I resigned because I believed that something else out there is the right job for me.

Hence, I'm now actively looking for a new job. Every week, I get a call from different companies for an interview. And because of this my friends have taken to calling me a professional interviewee. Indeed, at this point, with all the good and bad experiences I have had, I could, perhaps, write a long essay on the "do's and dont's in job interviews—for applicants, of course.

Looking back at these experiences is quite stressful. While my batch mates are already working, I'm still going through interviews. But I have not despaired, I believe that I will have my job very soon. For now, at least, I'm learning how to be patient, optimistic and to make good use of my time.

Congratulations to the graduates of 2007 and I wish you all the best!

Andrew Agunod Jr., 21, is a graduate of molecular biology and biotechnology from UP Diliman.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

Genuine CARP still needed

FR. ROMEO INTENGAN, S.J. echoed the call for Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman to step down after the latter failed to install 122 farmer-beneficiaries in their landholding in a sugar plantation in Negros Occidental. (INQUIRER, 3/13/07) This "call to quit" is partly correct but not enough.

The failure of Pangandaman is not his alone; it is also the failure of the entire government and the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program. A statement made last Jan. 28 by Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, the CBCP president, is correct. "[T]he law was defective in the first place, emasculated in the very beginning in a landlord-dominated Congress, further watered down in its implementation."

If CARP is defective, then the call for Pangandaman to quit and have him replaced with another DAR chief is not enough. The most appropriate call is to junk this defective CARP and formulate a genuine agrarian reform program with the experiences and insights of the toiling peasants.

—WARLITO V. FANILAG,
warlitofanilag@yahoo.com

Illogical allegations against NPO's Evardone

THIS REFERS TO NORMAN BORdadora's news story "Palace sits on exec's case." (INQUIRER, 3/7/07)

The report mentioned resolutions issued by the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission recommending the dismissal of Felipe P. Evardone, officer in charge of the National Printing Office, for graft. It also mentioned our company as a party in a graft case filed by Bestforms Inc. In its complaint, Bestforms apparently alleged that "one of Ready Form's owners had given Evardone a car"; that "the revocation of Bestforms' accreditation had been done with undue haste"; and that "Evardone had favored the company that eventually received the contract for LTO forms."

Since we have no copy of this reported PAGC resolution—try as we may, we could not get one; we were told it is a confidential document, recommendatory in nature, hence, has no force and effect and cannot and should not be used by any party until such time as the Office of the President has finally resolved the case—we can only respond on the basis of what had been published.

Bestforms' accreditation was revoked for cause by the NPO sometime last year after the resident COA auditor of the LTO found that the company, on several instances, delivered "poor quality papers" to the LTO through the NPO; the deliveries (amounting to P3.3 million) passed censure because of the connivance between Bestforms and certain LTO and NPO officials (prior to Evardone's assumption of office). Cases against Bestforms and its officials have been filed with the Office of the Ombudsman and the prosecutor's office. We feel that, in the interest of fair coverage, there should also be a story on this.

After the revocation of Bestforms' accreditation, the NPO conducted a public bidding for Bestforms' orders. Among several bidders, our company won with the lowest complying offer (10 percent to 13 percent lower than Bestforms' prices)—a fact apparently deliberately withheld by Bordadora's informant and also overlooked by the PAGC.

The allegation that one of the owners of our company gifted Evardone with a car is pure canard. The car in question was purchased by Evardone's better-half in July 2005 from a family friend who happened to be one of our stockholders. But the vehicle belonged to the stockholder who paid for it with personal (not company) funds; and the sale took place long before Evardone was appointed to government office. Proof of this: the car was already declared in his SAL when he assumed office as an assistant director of the NPO in September 2005; and the NPO security detail has on record that Evardone used the car on his first day of work at the NPO.

How then could there have been graft when our LTO forms cost substantially lower than Bestforms? And why would we have to lower our prices if, indeed, our company had invested in a car for Evardone? Where's the logic?

—CLARO JORDAN M. SANTAMARIA,
president, Ready Form Inc.,
37 Balagtas cor. Apitong Sts.,
Marikina Heights, Marikina City

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LETTERS

Let Batangueños choose their own governor

THIS IS IN CONNECTION WITH the threat issued by some governors to junk reelectionist Sen. Ralph Recto should his wife, Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos-Recto run for governor in the province of Batangas. (INQUIRER, 3/10/07) The governor of Sulu was apparently misinformed about the political situation in Batangas. There is an overwhelming clamor among Batangueños for Mayor Vilma to run for governor.

Likewise she is the clear choice of religious institutions, NGOs, civic associations, women's groups, etc. in Batangas. During her three terms as city mayor, Mayor Vilma proved her competence, sincerity and dedication with solid accomplishments and unblemished leadership. That she will win by a landslide is not an exaggeration.

With due respect to the governors of Sulu and Agusan del Sur, may I request them to confine themselves to their respective provinces. Their meddling in other provinces' choice of governor is uncalled for. Junking re-electionist Sen Ralph Recto is incompatible with the resolution of the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP), which vowed support for all 12 candidates of Team Unity to which Senator Recto belongs.

We assure you, Vilma Santos-Recto will be a valuable asset as a new member of the LPP.

—SOFRONIO NAS ONA JR.,
mayor, Municipality of Calaca,
Province of Batangas

Do Filipino photographers have less rights than foreigners in RP?

I'M INTO PHOTOGRAPHY AS A hobby, with a point-and-shoot camera and a large Digital SLR camera. But many security people forbid me from taking photographs of almost everything: buildings, transportation facilities, parks (even public ones, be they in Manila, Makati or Marikina), etc. More so when I'm using a DSLR. Isn't this curtailment of freedom? If I were taking photos of private houses or intellectual property, I'd understand. But, then, when foreigners are the ones taking pictures, the guards don't bother them.

And what's in a DSLR camera that makes it a security risk, and why are the handy point-and-shoot and mobile-phone cameras less dangerous? In Intramuros, the security personnel don't mind if I'm using my small camera. But they do the moment I take out my DSLR. What are they so afraid of? I find their security mindset too "old school" and obsolete in these times when everybody can take a snapshot of almost everything and post photos on the Internet.

Haven't they heard of Google Earth which can show images even of military installations from up above? I'm trying to promote our country through the Internet and yet my very own countrymen are making it so hard for me and other photographers. Only in the Philippines!

—TITO BASA,
tito.basa@gmail.com

Seniors still denied 20% discount

IN THE MARCH 12 ISSUE OF THE INQUIRER, Ramon J. Farolan wrote in his column that Trade Secretary Peter Favila urged senior citizens, should they encounter some problems regarding the implementation of the 20-percent discount, to report the same to the DTI Direct Call Center. Hence this letter.

Last Feb. 16, 2007, my friend and I, both senior citizens, took our lunch in a restaurant located at Timog Avenue corner Scout Tuazon, Quezon City. When I paid for our bill, I presented my senior citizen ID card and that of my friend's, together with my credit card.

We were told that senior citizen cards were not honored by the establishment in bills paid through credit cards. According to them, to avail themselves of the 20-percent discount, senior citizens must pay in cash. When I asked them if they were willing to sign a document attesting to what they had just told us, they readily said yes and signed the receipt.

—ADEODATO C. DUQUE JR.,
Unit N, G&M Complex,
109-A JP Rizal St.
Project 4, Quezon City

Ban spam in cell phones, e-mail

THE UNITED KINGDOM AND Italy have banned spam in cell phones and e-mail. For a violation of this regulation, Italy has imposed an imprisonment of up to three years.

Junk messages are a waste of time, money and effort. It is said that millions of dollars are lost in wasted productivity as a result of junk messages. Although the United Kingdom has targeted mainly e-mail spam (making these a criminal offense), text messages on our cell phones have definitely a similar effect.

Now there is more reason for the Philippines to ban junk electronic messages.

—GIGI RAMOS,
lightpalm@hotmail.com

Team Unity: Where our money goes

TEAM UNITY SEEMS TO HAVE ASSUMED that the public is already used to administration candidates always having the advantage of machinery and funding during elections. However, this begs the question: Where does Team Unity source its campaign funds? To answer this, we only need to look at the government's primary source of funds—the national budget.

On Oct. 13, 2006, the House of Representatives approved the General Appropriation Act (GAA) for 2007 (P1.126 trillion national budget), which the President certified as urgent. The House members were in such a rush they had to cast their votes at dawn, after 15 consecutive hours of session.

The 2007 GAA has been with Malacañang. But, until now, it is unsigned, purportedly being studied for possible "line vetoing," which is a prerogative of the President, the Palace says.

With Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo sitting on the budget law, we went into a new fiscal year without a new budget. As a result, the government may end up again with a reenacted budget. In this scenario, GMA can simply realign the allocations for projects and programs finished last year to items under her discretion—for election purposes.

Sad to say, while GMA dilly-dallies over a budget she herself certified as urgent, the government has been operating on a reenacted budget. As we all know, a reenacted budget can be treated as a lump sum which the President can dispense with as she pleases.

Now, more than ever, we should learn our lessons from recent history. In the last 2004 presidential election, the government used a reenacted budget. During that time, in connivance with then Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn Bolante, P728 million of the Ginintuang Masaganang Ani (GMA Rice) program was reportedly used to augment GMA's 2004 campaign kitty. Not only that, GMA was also accused of using P5 million to P25 million in taxpayers' funds to cover the cost of PhilHealth cards distributed to the public during the election campaign.

Certainly, if GMA's allies did it in the past, as alleged, they can do it again.

The vulnerability of the budget to absolute executive control is bad enough; it gets worse when this absolute control is used without scruples. It is not hard to imagine that a regime as Machiavellian as GMA's is now using public funds to pump up Team Unity's campaign.

We in the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) believe that the only sustainable solution to this recurring problem is to make the budget process more transparent, democratic and accountable.

FDC calls for public vigilance, especially during this period, when the logic of money politics directs the unscrupulous instincts of politicians to use, for their own selfish ends, whatever public funds they can get their hands on. We thereby call on the voters to reject any candidate who use public money in his or her campaign for a seat in government.

—JAMES MIRAFLOR,
campaigner,
Freedom from Debt Coalition,
11 Matimpiin St.,
Central District, Quezon City

IPP rates should be lower than Napocor's

THIS IS IN REPLY TO ELPI CUNA'S LETTER, "Meralco for lower electricity rates" (INQUIRER 3/8/07) and Rodolfo Albano Jr.'s, "ERC clarifies metering charges." (INQUIRER, 3/9/07) While it is only Cuna who refers to my earlier letter, "Electricity should be part of senatorial debate," (INQUIRER, 3/2/07), Albano also touches on issues I raised: supply and metering charges, and system loss.

To reiterate, I have no problem with Meralco as a utility. The issues arise from the Lopezes' management of Meralco.

1. The undisputed fact is that in November 2003, Meralco was buying power from Lopez-owned independent power producers (IPPs)—First Gen, First Gas and Quezon Power—at P4.20/kWh when Napocor was selling at P2.40/kWh. This is on record in the "Rate Unbundling Decision" of the Energy Regulatory Commission. Is this what Cuna calls the "supply mix (that) will yield the lowest cost to consumers"? Buy high when there is cheap supply?

Cuna invokes "existing contracts" as basis for Meralco's decision to buy from the Lopez-owned IPPs; yet in 2001, the Lopez-managed Meralco walked away from its "existing contract" with Napocor for cheaper electricity, to buy expensive power from Lopez-owned IPPs.

By the way, the Lopez-owned First Generation Corp, a Meralco IPP, reported a net income of $92 million (P4.4 billion) in 2006, up from $87 million the previous year.

Note, too, that at the time the Lopez-owned IPPs were contracted in the '90s, their quoted price was lower than Napocor's, because EO 215 required that for any new capacity or power supply to be allowed, it had to be so efficient as to be cheaper than Napocor's rates. How the rates of Meralco's IPP morphed into double the Napocor rates in 2003, only the ERC, as regulator, can explain. Otherwise, another Meralco refund should be forthcoming.

2. On system loss, the point is that it should be considered part of the distribution cost, so that Meralco cannot go around saying it is more efficient than it actually is by claiming that it is a smaller percentage of total power cost than it really is.

3. On the supply and metering charges that the ERC defends, commercial and industrial customers pay a fixed monthly charge (P650/month) while residential customers pay fixed (P5/month) and variable (P0.24/kWh) charges. Given those rates, households pay over P0.24/kWh while an industrial customer with 50,000 kWh consumption pay under P0.00003/kWh. While Albano claims he merely allows the distribution utility to recover meter and equipment costs, based on the Epira, why allow them to recover more from the households than from the commercial/industrial customers?

That the ERC and Meralco invoke Epira as basis for this lopsided billings and unmitigated self-dealing underscores the fundamental flaws in that law, which needs to be reviewed to purge its iniquitous and oppressive provisions. With more reason, Epira should be part of the senatorial debate and political discourse.

—CENON MAKALINAO,
cmakalinao@yahoo.com

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Extracting cash from Mayon's rocks

By Ephraim Aguilar
Daraga, Albay

VOLCANIC ROCKS SCATtered over barren fields would not mean much to ordinary people in Daraga town in Albay except as reminders of a tragedy for lahar survivors.

But for six years now, Vicente Ajero, 46, has been creating images out of the rocks, wielding a hammer and a nail used as chisel.

Ajero, who is called "Enteng Bato" in Barangay Busay near the Cagsawa Ruins, said he made his first sculpture after picking up a red rock while walking. He was fascinated by its color.

When he got home, he tried carving an image out of it with a hammer and a nail attached to a rubber pipe. He formed an image of Jesus Christ—his first artwork—in one week.

The image was important for him, he said. But, unfortunately, he lost it to a flash flood at the height of Supertyphoon "Reming."

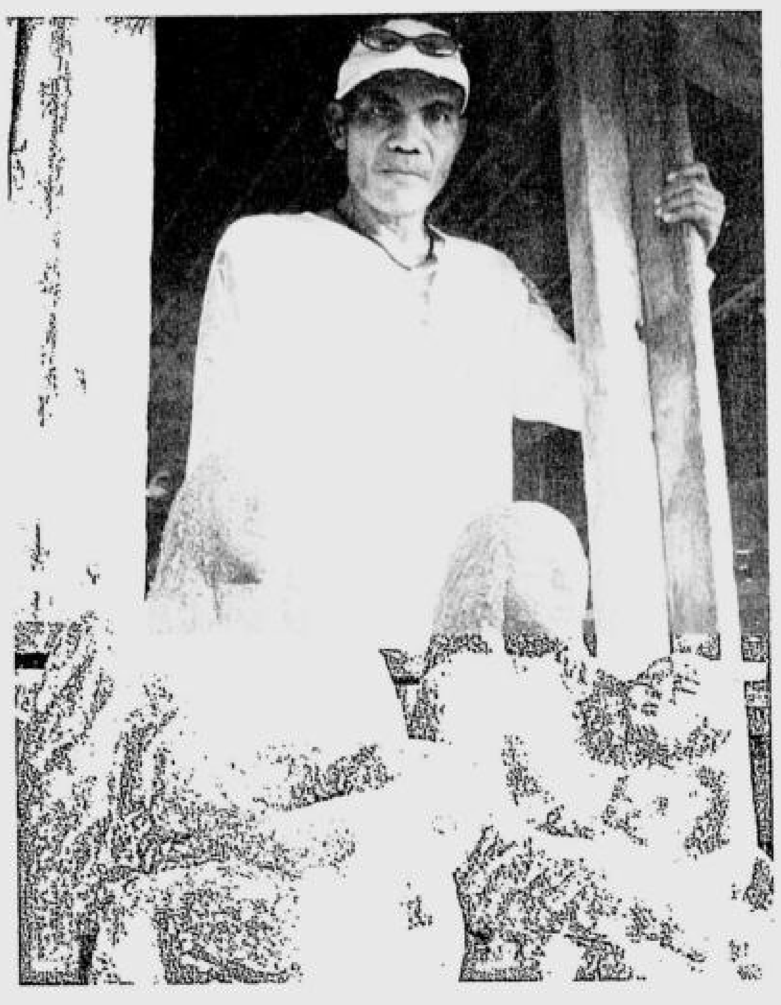
Volcanic rocks and other debris loosened from the slopes of Mount Mayon abound in surrounding lahar-struck villages like Busay, where Ajero's Mayon Artstone Shop is found.

The shop is a 3-meter by 4-meter nipa hut that Ajero himself constructed. It is near the historical Cagsawa Ruins—traces of Mayon's eruption in 1814 that killed 1,200 people and buried hundreds of houses in surrounding areas.

'Buga'

It is easy to carve Mayon's rocks, the hardened magma locally called the "*buga*," because they are soft and brittle, Ajero said. He uses the same kind of stone to polish the surface of his sculptures.

Ajero lives alone in a room in a dwelling damaged by lahar at Busay. He lost his house in the neighboring town of Camalig to floods. In his solitude, he draws out his ideas and emotions for his sculptures or the songs he writes, he said.



VICENTE Ajero, 46, also known as "Enteng Bato" carves an image by means of a hammer and a nail at the lahar site in Barangay Busay. He has been doing this for six years now but, he said, not many people patronize his craft. EPHRAIM AGUILAR

The types and sizes of design vary in his shop. He carves human images, Mayon, the Cagsawa belfry, candle holders, chairs, tables and many other items.

One of the designs closest to his heart is the "mother and child image" that reminds him of childhood days. His mother is now almost blind and lives with one of his siblings.

No two designs can be exactly the same, Ajero said.

"My design would depend upon the rock. I don't usually think much of what design I am going to carve. I don't sketch it first on paper. I just do it and would end up with all these designs," he said in Filipino.

Among his collections are a mother breastfeeding a child; Daragang Magayon, the folkloric woman whose grave became Mayon; a woman under bed covers, and an almost abstract image of a man and a woman making love.

The price of each sculpture depends on how big or complicated the design is. Prices range from P300 to P10,000.

Ajero finishes his sculptures in one day (for the simple designs) to at most one month (for the complicated ones.)

The Cagsawa belfry costs P300; mortar and pestle, P350; candle holder that looks like a dumbbell, P150-P200; and mother and child varieties, P2,500-P10,000.

All of Ajero's sculptures are unpainted so that, he said, it would look authentic and natural. But some volcanic rocks come in colors other than the usual gray.

Lean sales

Ajero had thought that he could earn a living out of his stone art. He never really earned from his paintings and his folk songs.

He survives mainly by doing contractual jobs. He now works for a project of the municipal government to clean and landscape the Ligñon Hill, where the unfinished Mayon View Deck lies.

Not many people seem to be interested with his sculptures, he said. During lean months, he would sell only two items.

"Almost none of the foreign tourists and travelers buy my work because they are hard to carry since they are made of pure volcanic rock. But I just love doing this," Ajero said.

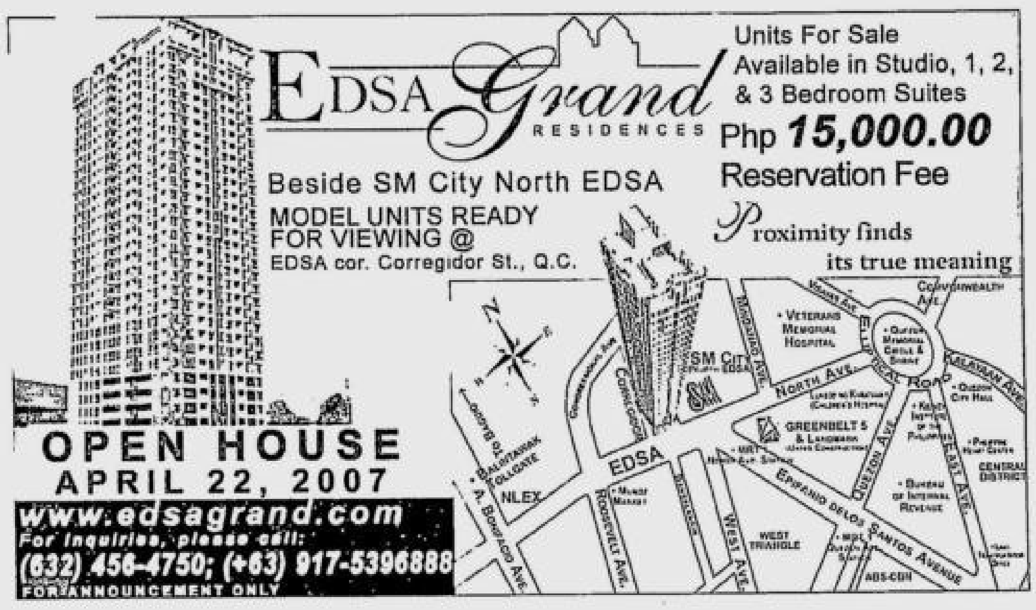
Hope

Ajero said he still saw hope in his craft and that it might just take him out of poverty.

"When someone buys my sculptures, I use the money to buy food and other needs. When there's none, I only rely on my income from my contractual jobs," he said.

If someone who trusts in his skills would be willing to invest in him, he'd be willing to take it. "In putting up this small shop, I did not have any capital but only my mind, my talent, and the rocks I can freely pick anywhere," he said.

A Filipino expression puts it, "*Pera na naging bato pa.*" But Ajero said he wanted to be known as a man who could make a living out of rocks and reverse the adage to "*Bato na naging pera pa.*"



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SUPPLYLINK 2007

Supplylink 2007 is the Philippine Institute for Supply Management's 15th Annual Conference and Trade Exhibit. This year's theme, SUPPLY MANAGEMENT TODAY: TOWARDS RELEVANCE AND PROGRESS underlines PISM mission to fully train and equip supply managers with today's most relevant tools, learnings and best practices in the field of supply management. This year's event has brought in the best combination of speakers and topics, spanning the technical and functional sides of the profession.

More than 20 technical sessions are set, encompassing the key supply management areas of Purchasing, Logistics and Customer Service and Demand and Replenishment Management. More so, Supplylink showcases the latest products, services, technology and systems.

With Supplylink 2007, PISM remains to be at the forefront of the country's supply management landscape by continually equipping and updating its members with the needed perspectives, education, linkages and networking opportunities. This will enable them to focus with confidence in driving their companies to greater competitiveness through supply management innovation and efficiency.

ABOUT PISM

Founded in 1968, Philippine Institute for Supply Management is a non-stock, non-profit organization of supply management professionals devoted to the advancement of the profession. It envisions to be a world-class prime mover and resource center of supply chain management and leadership excellence in Asia.

PISM currently has 300 member companies coming from various industries located in Metro Manila and 3 provincial chapters in Cebu, Davao and Negros Occidental.

Through its seminars, industry group forums, general membership meetings, conferences and other activities, PISM is an effective source of new methods, technologies and ideas from the business world.

PISM further strengthened its alliances with international organizations by being a C.P.M. (Certified Purchasing Manager) allied member of the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) based in Arizona, U.S.A., an affiliate of the International Federation of Purchasing and Supply Management (IFPSM) based in Switzerland, the International Trade Center - United Nations (ITC-UNCTAD CNUCED WTO OUC) and most recently the United Kingdom's Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS).

Messages

Warmest greetings to the members of the Philippine Institute for Supply Management (PISM) as you hold your 15th National Conference and Trade Exhibit, dubbed as SUPPLYLINK 2007.

Since 1968, PISM has been at the forefront of the country's supply chain management. In fact, the success of most of our companies and our country's global competitiveness would not have been made possible without your support and contributions. Your theme, "Supply Management Today: Towards Relevance and Progress", shows your untiring commitment to promote the supply management profession and to focus on the continued development of your practitioners.

I laud your organization's efforts to further enhance our competitive edge. And I wish you all the success as you continue to improve your services by way of the newest technological innovations and strategies in the supply management profession.

More power and Mabuhay!

(SGD.) GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President, Republic of the Philippines

It has been 15 years since the Philippine Institute for Supply Management started this yearly undertaking we call Supplylink.

For 2007, and in keeping with the Institute's theme for this fiscal year, our Annual Conference and Exhibit focuses and highlights Supply Management Today: Towards Relevance and Progress. How appropriate as the word link connotes progression.

So on this Crystal Anniversary of the Institute's Supplylink gathering, I sincerely thank and welcome all the participants, sponsors, benefactors, exhibitors and advertisers.

Onwards to Relevance and Progress.

(SGD.) CARMELO C. OCAMPO, FSM
President, Philippine Institute for Supply Management

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Dagupan mayor says he's sure of running vs De Venecia

DAGUPAN CITY—MAYOR BENjamin Lim on Tuesday said he is definitely running against Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. in the congressional race in Pangasinan's fourth district.

Lim's announcement came after efforts to convince him to back out of the race and run instead for reelection apparently failed on Monday night.

"No deal," Lim told reporters here, mimicking what contestants usually do in the popular television game show, "Deal or No Deal."

Lim said he met with De Venecia at the office of former President Fidel Ramos, chair emeritus of the administration Lakas-CMD. But he said nothing was reached during the meeting.

"*Oo, nag-usap kami kagabi, pero di kami nagkaintindihan. Masaya kami* (Yes, we talked last night but we did not understand each other. We were happy). We had red wine. We were all smiling when we left the office of FVR (Ramos)," Lim said.

"I was grinning from ear to ear. *Masayang masaya ako pero yong isang tao, di masaya e* (I was very happy. But one of us was not)," he said.

Lim said Ramos was trying to settle the impasse in the congressional race in the fourth district as chair emeritus of the party.

"When I came in, I just expressed my desire to run for Congress and I made it clear [to them] that I owe it to the people [of the fourth district] to give them a choice," Lim said.

He said speculations that he was running again for mayor "were just speculations."

"*At iyong mga sinasabi rin nilang nabili nila ako* (And talks that I have been bought) are just black propaganda," Lim said. *Gabriel Cardiñoza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

'Jueteng,' polls seen reasons for move to oust Bicol cop chief

LEGAZPI CITY—A worsening feud between two members of a powerful political clan in Bicol is threatening to cut short the tour of duty of the region's police chief and efforts to stamp out jueteng in the region.

The feud is between Rep. Luis Villafuerte (Camarines Sur) and his son, Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Raymund Villafuerte, but it's dragging with it Chief Supt. Ricardo Padilla, the regional police chief.

Padilla said in an interview yesterday that he has been trying to distance himself from the feud, but sources at the Department of Interior and Local Government said he has already fallen victim.

A top official of the Philippine National Police said efforts are being made now by the elder Villafuerte to have Padilla replaced by a Chief Supt. Val Tira, a member of Class '78 of the Philippine Military Academy and currently administrator of the Philippine National Police Academy.

Padilla refused to comment on the feud between the Villafuerte father and son, saying he was merely concentrating on his job.

The INQUIRER learned from a highly placed source in Camp Crame in Quezon City that Padilla, who took over the regional command only on Dec. 28 last year, was on his way out as regional police chief.

Officials interviewed by the INQUIRER also said that, indeed, there had been reports of the impending relief of Padilla.

Other sources said at the heart of Padilla's relief was the operations of jueteng in the region. A ranking DILG official said jueteng operators in Bicol consider Padilla as an obstacle to their continued operations.

The Camp Crame source said Padilla was caught in the political rivalry between the two Villafuertes.

Padilla said he has not received any order replacing him, but if told to leave Bicol, "I will not stay any day longer."

"Like any good follower, I serve at the pleasure of our superior officer," said Padilla.

"But until I receive one (order replacing him), I will continuously do my assigned tasks."

He refused to comment when asked what could be the reason for efforts to relieve him, but said he doubts that it was his operations against jueteng or the rivalry between the two Villafuertes.

Under Padilla, jueteng stopped in Albay and Sorsogon but continued in Camarines Sur, the Villafuertes' turf, and Camarines Norte.

The Camarines Sur operation is reportedly being handled by a certain Bogart while that in Camarines Norte is being run by one Jessie Lao.

Senior Supt. Romeo Mapalo, Camarines Sur police director, said his men had been relentlessly going after jueteng operations in the province.

"When I was assigned in the province, there had been jueteng already but I have always gone after the illegal numbers game," said Mapalo, who is retiring in two months.

He said his men had arrested 28 jueteng workers in Ragay, Buhi, Libmanan and Nabua.

Governor Villafuerte earlier asked for the relief of Mapalo but the police officer has remained in his post reportedly due to the backing of the governor's father, Representative Villafuerte.

The Camp Crame source said Padilla was supportive of the Lakas party of the governor. The elder Villafuerte bolted Lakas and joined the Kampi.

But like Padilla, Governor Villafuerte said politics had nothing to do with the Bicol police chief's reported impending relief.

He said he has always been against illegal activities in the province, especially jueteng and illegal fishing.

Inquirer Southern Luzon

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NG MALAYAN
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REP. LUIS Villafuerte and President Macapagal-Arroyo preside over the first national convention of Ms Arroyo's party, Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino or Kampi at the Manila Hotel. LYN RILLON

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More pork graft exposed: PCs at ₱217,500 each

From page A1

tructure projects.

A congressman representing a district is allocated P65 million in PDAF a year and a party-list representative, P35 million. A senator gets P200 million in PDAF.

Shabbily built roads

In a presentation yesterday, Code-NGO officers said PDAF Watch "monitors" from around the country, who worked on the project between 2005 and 2006, reported the following:

- Of the 64 road projects nationwide that were covered by the report, 18 projects, or 28 percent, were found "defective" when inspected less than a year after their completion. The shabbily built roads already had potholes, cracks, or thinning layers of concrete or gravel.
- Of the same sample, two road projects were actually nonexistent yet declared "completed" in documents the volunteers had obtained from the Department of Public Works and Highways.
- The cost of the defective roads totaled P14 million, or 17 percent of the P84.6 million spent for the 64 roads in the sample.
- Of the seven IT projects monitored, six had PCs costing P217,500 each "even though their parts were unbranded" or could be had for much lower prices in the market.

Raise awareness

The report was dubbed the "first phase" of PDAF Watch, with the next edition expected to be released after the May elections.

The project aims to raise public awareness of how the controversial funds were actually being used, and to influence legislation that will make the projects more transparent, according to Code-NGO executive director Sixto Donato Macasaet.

In a parallel effort, PDAF Watch volunteers wrote all the 235 members of the House (including the 25 party-list representatives) and 23 senators in October 2005, requesting information on their pork-funded projects under the 2004 budget.

Only 20 solons cooperated

One year later, after a follow-up letter and several phone calls to their office, only 20 lawmakers, or 8 percent of the total number of House members and senators, bothered to furnish Code-NGO with documents.

"It is apparent that there is a big area for improvement in the transparency of the PDAF/CA projects of Congress," Macasaet said at a forum at the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City.

He said his group "encourages prosecution" and would be willing to assist others who would like to use the PDAF Watch findings as basis for filing graft cases before the Office of the Ombudsman.

Not necessarily liable

Macasaet conceded, however, that even among the ranks of the PDAF Watch volunteers, many would think twice about elevating the matter to the court and be publicly identified for security reasons.

He also explained that lawmakers were "not necessarily liable (*may kasalanan*)" if projects in their districts funded by pork or financed under their name began to smell fishy.

Districts of Joaquin and Fua

But on the sidelines of the forum, at least two volunteers agreed to be named in an INQUIRER interview and identified the lawmakers in whose districts they had found questionable projects.

Joseline Alesna of Sulong Bifian said she personally found allegedly overpriced computers in "23 schools" in Laguna, in the district of Rep. Uliran Joaquin.

Boy Tampus, chair of Siquijor Caucus of Development NGOs, said DPWH documents showed that a P1-million road project had been "completed" between Barangays Punong and San Antonio II in Siquijor town, areas under Rep. Orlando Fua Jr.

The supposed road was still just a "rough" dirt path when he first inspected it in June 2006—and remains so to this day, Tampus said.

'The issue should not be Delgados vs Gonzalezes'

From page A1

do when they arrived in his room at 10:30 p.m., but she was able to escape and report the incident to the police.

A newspaper (not the INQUIRER) reported that police had identified Luis "Louie" Gonzalez as a suspect or mastermind in the killing of his 51-year-old stepbrother. The reports floated a family feud over inheritance as the motive for the killing and said Louie could have planned the burglary so he could get his share of the Delgado fortune.

"This is nothing except one big hearsay. It is categorically impossible for my brother to have been anywhere near the scene of the crime," Ruby, wheelchair-bound since a car accident 18 years ago, told the INQUIRER.

Severe depression

"My brother has been severely depressed since the death of my mother and he was brought into the hospital to treat him for severe depression. It's so impossible that he's there (in the crime scene) because for your information, he is in the basement of the Makati Medical (Center), the neuro-psychiatric (department) where they treat severely depressed people. It is like a vault, I was not allowed to see my brother or talk to him," Ruby said. ***(For details of Luis Gonzalez's confinement, see story on Page A20.)***

Vicky Quirino Gonzalez-Delgado died of pneumonia on Nov. 29 last year in Amsterdam while visiting her grandchildren and great grandchildren, Ruby said.

"Mr. Gonzalez has been named in (Monday's) issue of the Manila Standard as the prime suspect in the killing of Mr. Delgado but the condition and whereabouts before, during and after the commission of the crime negate any possibility of his involvement therein," Ruby Gonzalez said in a prepared statement.

"The Gonzalez family strongly condemns the killing of Mr. Federico Delgado and looks forward to the speedy resolution of the case," the statement read.

(Yesterday, Chief Insp. Alex Yanquiling of the Manila Police District Homicide Division announced that police were set to file today robbery with homicide and frustrated murder charges against Gonzalez. See story in Metro, Page A20, that includes a statement by Gonzalez's lawyer, Perry Pe, that his client could not have participated in the murder because he was confined at a "maximum security" facility from March 7-18 and could not have been at the crime scene.)

Family background

The victim was one of six children from the first marriage of Paco Delgado, a wealthy businessman who after the death of his first wife married Vicky Syquia Quirino, the only surviving daughter of President Elpidio Quirino who acted as first lady during her father's term.

The Delgado family is engaged in shipping, brokerage, cargo, real estate and other businesses.

Ruby Gonzalez is one of the four children of Vicky Quirino with her late husband Luis Tuason Gonzalez. The other children of Vicky are Maria Victoria "Marivic," Maria Luisa "Marissa" and Louie Gonzalez, former husband of singer Kuh Ledesma.

Ruby, who has been running a successful business despite being on wheelchair, said her family had kept its silence since reports came out in the same paper talking about inheritance feud and implicating her family to the murder of Rico.

"We are in shock with that allegation that is totally baseless. If they have incontrovertible proof, proof beyond any shadow of doubt, why don't we take it to the proper channel and not leak stories to media irresponsibly," Ruby said.

"He's way too depressed to defend himself and that is what is so sad. And as his sister, I can't sit back and watch his face on TV as if he were already a confirmed suspect," she said. Louie has only Ruby to defend him because their two sisters are living abroad.

Not an inheritance feud

Ruby vehemently denied that the murder was about a feud on inheritance involving her brother.

"My one question is what motive does the Gonzalez family have in wanting to participate in something as grave as murder? Who is putting out all these press releases in the media. It is very strange that the press releases are exactly the same," she said.

LUIS "LOUIE" GONZALEZ has been undergoing treatment initially at the Asian Hospital before he was transferred to Makati Medical Center for severe depression over the death of his mother last November, according to the Gonzalez family lawyer. Gonzalez is the former husband of singer Kuh Ledesma.

She said her family stood to gain no inheritance from their stepfather because her mother was already dead.

"This is a terrible travesty of the truth. If the claim is that we want part of the Delgado money, we have no right to it since our mother died. We live a simple lifestyle, we work hard and I feel that our biggest pride and our asset, if you will, is the name that my grandfather left us, the name that my father and mother left us and we'll.not hesitate to defend it," Ruby said.

"Let us just assume that whatever feud happens between families and first and second marriages, that is not unusual. It's sadly a fact of life that when there are two families they don't usually have fantastic relationship but murder is a big step and one that we are definitely not capable of. What do we stand to gain with Rico's death?" Ruby said.

Ruby described her and her siblings' relationship with their Delgado stepbrothers as civil.

'Nobody deserves this ending'

"I will not say (we were) one big happy family (after their mother and father married), that's going too far but we're civil with each other," she said.

She said her stepfather, Paco Delgado, was an "excellent husband of my mother for 19 years and a wonderful stepfather for us four."

Ruby said she did not want to hurl counter-allegations.

"This is not about a family feud. This is about a murder. Let's keep our eye on the ball. What happened was a tragedy. We lost our mother in an untimely manner. They lost their brother in a most horrible circumstance, I really empathize with them, nobody deserves this ending," she said.

"We're working professionals, we came from a good family. I would like to think that our reputation is without any taint. We're not high profile, we are not ostentatious, we're working professionals," she said.

Louie, their youngest sibling, runs his own realty development business in the country while Marivic, a teacher who has a masters in education, now lives in Spain. Marissa works for the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

Let us not gossip

Ruby said her wish was for the Delgados and the Gonzalezes to "pull together for the just and speedy resolution" of Rico's murder.

"Let not gossip and slander and accusation and malicious news releases cloud the judgment with all these emotions. Both families have suffered so why don't we work together instead of coming (after) each other and hurling accusation," she said.

"I'm not here to hurl countercharges. I come here with a prayer for peace for both families. God does not sleep. What I pray for is peace among the families, for the law to be allowed to run its course. That the investigators do an excellent job and that justice is served, the truth will surface and it has to surface. It will set us all free from this nightmare," she said.

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Alaska sails past Welcoat, ties for second place

ALASKA'S Sonny Thoss controls the rebound against Welcoat's Rob Wainwright. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

TJ Giants nip Beermen in battle of bottom teams

GAME TODAY (*The Arena in San Juan*)
7 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs. Barangay Ginebra

By Musong R. Castillo

ALASKA HELD WELCOAT'S LOCALS UNDER control last night and pounded out a 99-78 victory that gave the Aces a piece of second place in the PBA Fiesta Cup eliminations at the Araneta Coliseum.

Rosell Ellis scored 18 points and four locals had 10 or better for the Aces, who rebounded from a stinging overtime loss to Red Bull last week to draw level with the Barako and Coca-Cola in second with 3-1 slates.

Charles Clark had 29 points for the newcomer Dragons and Jay-R Reyes finished with 18, but the others failed to come up with their usual numbers with second Welcoat import Alex Compton held to a harmless eight.

Welcoat took a second straight loss flush on the chin and is now at 1-3.

The "championship game" between Purefoods and San Miguel was good as advertised and Marquin Chandler was awesome in his first game back, leading the Tender Juicy Giants to a 79-77 in the second game.

Chandler, after sitting out Purefoods' first three losses, scored 11 of his 33 points in the fourth period before coming up with the defensive gem of the night that preserved the win.

San Miguel remained winless in four outings, but not after giving the Giants a heck of a fight.

"It's really nice to have Marquin back," Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio said. "We have been searching for a leader, a hero and a scorer."

"I'm smarter this year, even though I am still not 100 per cent," Chandler said.

The scores:

First Game

ALASKA 99—Ellis 18, Thoss 16, Hugnatan 10, Ferriols 10, Cariaso 10, Laure 9, Miller 9, Belasco 8, Singson 7, Bajar 2, Luanzon 0, Aban 0.

WELCOAT 78—Clark 29, Reyes 18, Compton 8, Ibanes 5, Cabatu 5, Gelig 4, Lopez 4, Sta. Maria 3, Weinwright 2, Baguion 0, Lao 0.

Quarters: 30-19, 54-33, 75-55, 99-78

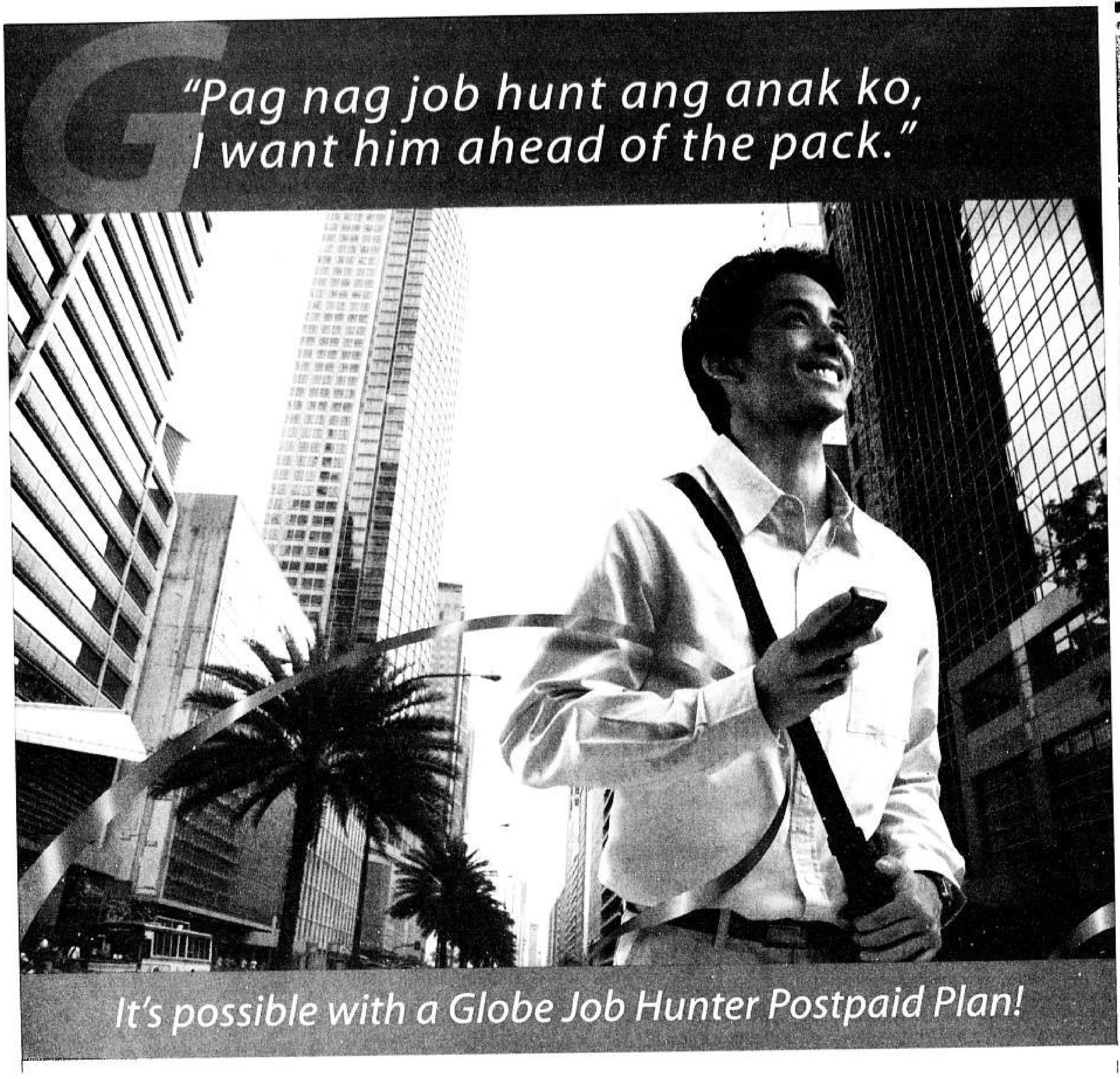
Second Game

PUREFOODS 79—Chandler 33, Yap 15, Yee 9, Artadi 6, Salvador 5, Simon 4, Evangelista 3, Castillo 2, Camaso 2, Gamboa 0.

SAN MIGUEL 77—McMillan 27, Tenorio 12, Calaguio 9, Cablay 8, Racela 8, Adducul 5, Pena 5, Adriano 3, Espinas 0, Gonzales 0, Wilson 0.

Quarters: 18-25, 40-44, 51-60, 79-77

Late Sports
More stories on A25 to 30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4 Manila cops get jail term for extortion

Sentence read in absentia; accused out on police operations

By Allison W. Lopez

FOUR MANILA POLICEMEN were sentenced to eight years in prison yesterday for robbing and extorting money from a businesswoman after they planted drugs in her bag.

Judge Silvino Pampilo of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 26 ordered the arrest of the accused—P01 Ferdinand Cajipe, P01 Arnold Malay, P01 Rolando Ladres and P01 Fernand Lagando—who were absent when their sentence was read in court.

They were also ordered to return the P100,000 in cash they took from the victim, Myrna Germedia.

Wilhelmena Macaraig, the policemen's lawyer, said her clients were engaged in "police operations."

In her testimony, Germedia said that she was accosted by the four policemen on Jan. 18, 2002 for illegal possession of drugs. She added that she was carrying P100,000 in cash which she was about to lend to a friend.

Germedia said she was brought to Station 11 in Binondo where the suspects took her bag.

Lagando then told her that they found a sachet of shabu inside her bank passbook and bragged that they could even plant a kilo of shabu or a small gun on her if they wanted to.

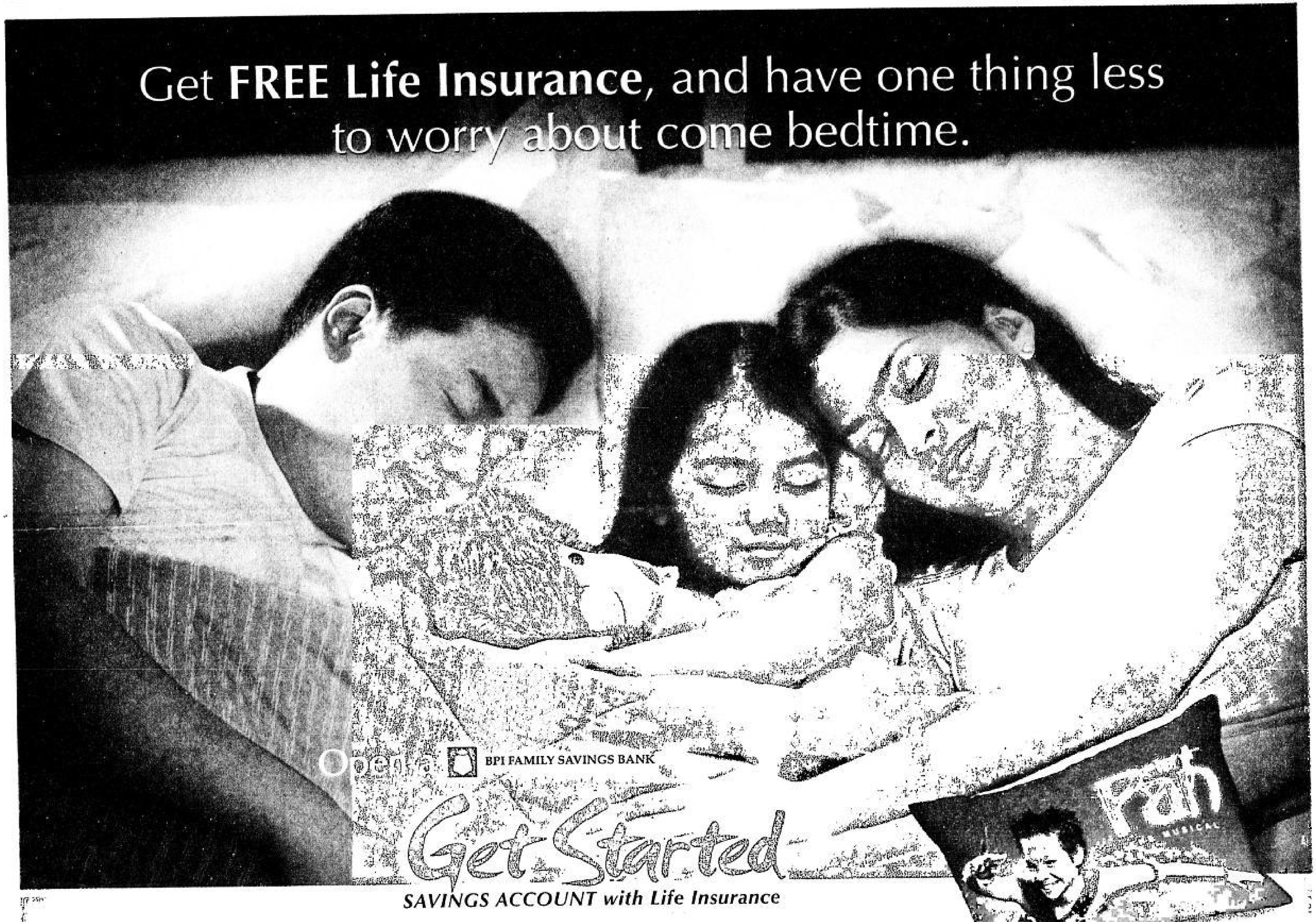
Germedia said she was transferred to a cell and was not allowed to make any phone calls.

She later underwent a drug test which turned out negative. Her P100,000 cash was never returned, she added.

In his decision, the judge pointed out that the accused themselves admitted that the procedure they followed in arresting Germedia was unusual.

In his testimony, Cajipe admitted that they conducted the operation against the businesswoman based on a tip provided by an unknown informant.

"Myrna (Germedia) was not listed in their order of battle (a list of known drug pushers) and yet, based on just a single phone call from a certain informant, a buy-bust operation was conducted without verifying anything," the judge said.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Delgado slay suspect faces rob, homicide charges

METROBRIEFS

Baby killed in fire

A ONE-AND-A-HALF-YEAR-OLD baby boy was killed when a 45-minute fire hit a residential area in Manila yesterday morning. The baby, Audre Fernandez, was charred beyond recognition after he was left alone in his family's two-story apartment at 4805 Road 2 V. Mapa Street in Sta. Mesa. His body was found on the ground floor near the stairs, according to SFO1 Rodelio Nelvis who added that the fire started at 10:50 a.m. in the apartment next door.

"His father was out working and it was not known where his mother was at the time of the incident," the fire official said. "Apparently, the baby was left alone in the house." Six houses were affected while damage to property was placed at around P100,000.

Tina G. Santos

Accidental death

TWO YOUNG girls died after they accidentally drank a substance used for cleaning metals and jewelry. Police identified the fatalities as Kizzly Mae Navarro, 5, and her sister Kayla Mae, 3, of 1659 Andalucia Street in Sta. Cruz, Manila. Investigation showed that the incident happened at 10 a.m. yesterday. The victims were rushed by their parents to the Family Clinic Hospital where they died after several hours.

Tina G. Santos

By Allison W. Lopez

THE MANILA POLICE IS SET TO file robbery with homicide and frustrated murder. charges against Luis "Louie" Gonzalez, 47, the former husband of singer Kuh Ledesma, in the city prosecutor's office today. *(See related story on Page A1).*

Chief Insp. Alex Yanquiling of the Manila Police District homicide division said they have enough basis to charge Gonzalez with participating in the killing of his stepbrother, businessman Federico "Rico" Delgado, on March 10.

"We will also petition the Department of Justice to issue a hold departure order to stop Gonzalez from leaving the country," he said.

Yanquiling said they were also looking for Gonzalez's driver and bodyguard, Antonio Buenaflor.

Gonzalez's legal counsel, Perry Pe, has already denied that his client was involved in the gruesome slay through a statement released the other day. Gonzalez became the victim's stepbrother when his mother, Vicky Quirino, married Francisco "Paco" Delgado, Rico's father. Quirino passed away in November last year.

Pe said his client could not have participated in the murder because he was confined in a "maximum-security facility" from March 7 to 18.

"Louie is not well, and he will need professional care to regain his emotional equilibrium. To accuse him of murder, at this time, perhaps the lowest point in his life, is grotesque and absurd," the statement said.

Soon after the statement was released, the police shifted their attention to Gonzalez's sister, Ruby Gonzalez-Meyer. After implicating Gonzalez as the "mastermind," they are now looking into the possibility that Meyer could have ordered the killing because of her "higher intellectual and mental capacity."

A police official who asked for anonymity said Rico and his brother, Franco, had a fight with Meyer over the conjugal ownership of some of their parents' properties, including condominium units.

According to Pe, Gonzalez was already confined in the psychiatric ward of Asian Hospital at the time Rico was killed.

He said that Gonzalez became incoherent and dissociative on March 6, conditions which arose from the depression he had sunk into since his mother died last year. His girlfriend, Maria Parsons, brought him to the hospital the next day.

"While in a hospital room, Louie suffered a severe anxiety attack and had to be restrained and sedated. His sister, Ruby was notified, and she dispatched her son, Marco G. Eduque, to the hospital. Louie's girlfriend, traumatized by the episode and suffering from exhaustion, left the hospital," Pe's statement said.

"Upon conference with the attending doctors, Louie was transferred that same day to the Makati Medical Center Basement in an ambulance, accompanied by Mr. Eduque. Louie remained at MMC Basement until March 18th, when he was transferred to another location, undisclosed to anyone, including his lawyer," it added.

Rico, 51, was stabbed dead by two unidentified men in his penthouse at the Mayflower building on Leon Guinto Street. Analiza Pesico, his companion, was beaten up by the suspects although she was able to escape and report the incident to the police.

Yanquiling said Pesico saw the face of one of the suspects when he removed his ski mask while trying to open a vault inside the dresser.

The vault's contents remain unknown though reports indicate they could be "important property documents."

SHARK ATTACK
A woman takes a picture of her family posing in front of the gaping jaws of a shark, actually a replica found on Baywalk, Roxas Boulevard, Manila.
EDWIN BACASMAS

DID YOU KNOW

QUEZON Institute on E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave. in Quezon City was established in 1938 to serve mainly underprivileged Filipinos suffering from lung ailments, especially tuberculosis. It is run by the Philippine Tuberculosis Society. The hospital was named after the late President Manuel L. Quezon who died of TB. It has a separate ward called Teachers' Pavilion which is meant for educators with respiratory problems.

Cyril L. Bonabente,
Inquirer Research

Sexagenarian former hospital cashier guilty, judge rules

By Margaux C. Ortiz

DESPITE HIS REPEATED EXpressions of sympathy for the "sickly sexagenarian," a Quezon City Regional Trial Court judge yesterday found a former cashier of a government hospital guilty of malversation of public funds and sentenced her to serve a maximum term of over 18 years in prison.

Judge Hilario Laqui of QC RTC Branch 218 said the prosecution was able to establish beyond reasonable doubt that Blandina P. Dulay embezzled more than P2 million entrusted to her by the Quirino Memorial Medical Center (QMMC).

He sentenced her to a minimum of 10 years and one day to a maximum of 18 years, eight months and one day.

However, the judge did not impose any fine on Dulay since she had already paid back the amount that was missing after she was charged in 2004.

"Sexagenarians, in the ordinary course of life, should be enjoying their retirement with their families, spared from the harsh realities and free from the roller coaster rides of life. Ironically, charged before this court is a sexagenarian, who is likewise of poor health," Laqui said in his decision.

The court document showed that Dulay, then a cashier of the QMMC, was charged for taking advantage of her position and embezzling over P2.2 million in hospital funds "to the damage and prejudice of the government."

During the trial, hospital chief Dr. Rosalinda Arandia testified that she noticed discrepancies in the hospital's certificate of deposit and daily collections in June 2002.

Audit reports confirmed that Dulay had failed to deposit more than P2 million at the Land Bank of the Philippines, prompting a QMMC audit team leader to send the accused a letter requiring her to account for the cash shortage.

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NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
TMM MANAGEMENT INC. 3/F Philamlife Bldg., C. Palanca St., Legaspi Village, Makati City	Enzo Artone	Consultant-Project Development
BLUE TECH PHILIPPINES, INC. Unit 2501, 25/F Antel Global Corporate Centre, Dona Julia Vargas Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City	Mark Jeremy Devison	Technical Project Coordinator
JIGUCHON TRAVEL & TOURS, INC. 18/F Ramon Magsaysay Center, 1680 Roxas Blvd., Manila	Chang Kyou Lee	Sales Manager
VOCATIV SYSTEMS, INC. G/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St., Crescent Park West Bonifacio Global City, Taguig	Milind Yashwant Tilak	Manager
PARAGON INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMER CARE LTD. 14/F Yuchengco Tower1, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Ave., Makati City	Hadassah Channa Salomon	Customer Support Staff
SPORTS BOOKIE ONLINE INC. 26/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Herry Albertinus	Customer Support Staff
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COCA-COLA BOTTLERS PHILIPPINES, INC. 19th,20th,23rd Floors, San Miguel Properties Center, #7 St. Francis St., Mandaluyong City	Johan De Vos	Chief Finance Officer
AMBAK TRADING INC. Unit 7, Aurora Arcade, Interneighborhood, Brgy. Holy Spirit, Isidora Hills, Quezon City	Hongku Hur	Marketing Manager
CONVERGYS PHILS. SERVICES CORP. 6796 Ayala Ave., Salcedo St., Makati City	Robert Charles Bramwell	Sr. Operations Manager for OnStar

If you have any information/objection to the abovementioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
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(PDI-March 22, 2007)

Chief Justice Puno's principled stand

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THE DISMISSAL OF COURT OF Appeals Justice Elvi John Asuncion by the Supreme Court stemmed from demanding bribes from people whose cases were pending in his division, according to inside sources at the high tribunal.

The ignorance-of-the-law reason was given to make his dismissal a little palatable and "less dishonorable," the same sources said.

Asuncion, my sources added, was never ignorant of the law, even going around it to make a huge pile.

The high court had known about his demand for bribes for decided cases or temporary restraining orders (TROs) issued, but couldn't pin him down because there was no complainant.

The high tribunal acted on an unsigned letter alleging that Asuncion had been sitting on motions for reconsideration for six months up to more than a year.

The only tangible proof the Supreme Court had against Asuncion was his "malicious delay in the administration of justice and gross ignorance of the law."

Why was there a delay in issuing decisions, as observed by the high tribunal.

Asuncion's behavior got him in trouble when two bags apparently full of money were allegedly sent to his office by persons involved in a case pending in his division.

But there was no complainant, so the administrative charge against him was dismissed.

His dismissal has sent a clear message to other corrupt justices and judges that the high court under Chief Justice Reynato Puno is bent on cleaning up the judiciary of misfits and undesirable people.

My lawyer, the late Tomas O. del Castillo, would have been proud of Puno who was his close friend and classmate at the University of the Philippines College of Law.

Tom del Castillo always spoke very highly of Puno whenever we had coffee or lunch together.

I'm sure that wherever Tom is now, he's smiling his inimitable smile at his friend's principled stand against judicial corruption.

Tom was a very principled man, and I'm lucky to have been his friend.

It's in Tom's memory that made me decide to bear down hard on corrupt magistrates.

* * *

There is more to the alleged Cebu lampposts scam than meets the eye.

My spies at the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) in Cebu tell me that the biggest scam would have involved a project to install P90 million worth of traffic surveillance equipment allegedly by a local contractor.

This private contractor reportedly filed a plunder case against the contractors who allegedly grossly overpriced the Cebu lampposts.

He won in the bidding for the P90-million project, but the project didn't push through after he allegedly failed to meet the deadline for the delivery of the traffic surveillance equipment.

Had the project pushed through, my DPWH sources say, the surveillance cameras alone would have cost P1.9 million each!

The surveillance cameras would have been an added security measure in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Summit held in Cebu in January.

Although the project did not push through, it is interesting to note DPWH Regional Director Robert Lala and his subordinates approved the contractor's proposal.

Had his project pushed through, Lala would have been in bigger trouble than what he is facing now.

Courtroom drama mars Leviste arraignment

LEVISTE, flanked by police escorts, waits for the start of court proceedings yesterday. At right, Dominador Llanes, Leviste's alleged photographer, leaves the court after incurring the ire of State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco.

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

By DJ Yap

AN ANGRY JOSE ANTONIO LEViste yesterday challenged two female members of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) to a fist fight during a hearing of his murder case.

Leviste, former governor of Batangas who was arraigned on charges of killing his aide Rafael de las Alas, also lashed out at the lead prosecutor, the victim's daughter and the media, saying he was a victim of a "miscarriage of justice."

The hearing started at 9 a.m. after about an hour of debate as Leviste's lawyers sought another deferment of their client's arraignment on murder charges.

The arraignment, however, pushed through although Leviste refused to enter a plea, prompting Judge Elmo Alameda of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 150 to enter a "not guilty" plea on his behalf.

The confrontation between Leviste and the VACC coordinators occurred moments after Alameda called a five-minute recess.

At about 11 a.m., Leviste approached the VACC coordinators seated at an adjacent bench and asked them: "Do you know what you're doing here?"

"*Gusto niyo rin ba ng babagan* (Do you also want a fight)?" he asked. ("Babagan" is Batangueno slang for a fight.) The women, one of whom was identified as Honey Geroza, did not reply but told Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco what transpired.

Velasco later made a manifestation to put on record what happened. This led to another verbal tussle between the prosecutor and Leviste, who said Velasco should stop since he (Leviste) would "be able to get even anyway."

At which point, Velasco said: "I want to be professional. I came here to this court trying to be professional. I just want the accused to explain why he is threatening me."

He also demanded in open court the name of Leviste's photographer who took pictures of him, the VACC coordinators and other reporters, reportedly on orders of the accused.

At one point, Velasco held the photographer, Dominador Llanes, by the shoulders and demanded to know his name. Alameda put a stop to the exchange and asked Velasco to put his manifestation in writing.

Later, Leviste told reporters: "I'm very sad for Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco for not knowing he's beyond bounds in his role as a 'persecutor.'"

"I'm very sad, sad for Dina de las Alas (the victim's daughter) for allowing herself to be used by legal bounty hunters as an instrument for blackmail," he said.

He added, "I'm very sad for the public who wittingly or unwittingly have been misled by media to believe the lies made by publicity seekers like Prosecutor Velasco."

"I have been a victim of a miscarriage of justice. This Velasco, I learned, has done this to many people before me. I'm not his first victim. I hope I'm the last," Leviste said. Sought for comment, Velasco objected to being called a publicity seeker and legal bounty hunter, saying there was "a need to be transparent to the media" to prevent corruption in the justice system.

Dina on the other hand, answered back: "Who is he referring to? We are the victims here. Any moral support we get, we welcome. We are the aggravated party. We have no money or influence."

The court also heard the testimony of Southern Police District Senior Insp. Elizalde Odi who testified that the 9 mm gun De Las Alas was holding at the time of the killing had the safety lock on.

The prosecution is trying to establish that they have strong evidence against Leviste and that he should not be granted bail.

De las Alas was found dead inside his office at the LPL Tower in Makati City on Jan. 12. Leviste later confessed that he shot his friend and longtime aide in self-defense.

Meralco robbery could be inside job, say cops

By Jeannette I. Andrade

POLICE INVESTIGATORS ARE EYEING the possible involvement of an insider in Tuesday's robbery of the Manila Electric Co. office in Commonwealth, Quezon City.

Describing the operation as "too easy," a senior police official of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) said that several indicators point to an accomplice in the company.

"The robbery was carried out too easily and the robbers knew vital information that helped their heist succeed," the source, who asked for anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media, told the INQUIRER.

The suspects knew that the receiving counters were loaded with cash payments at that time because it was the due date for electricity bill payments, he added.

He also pointed to the lax security at the Meralco office in Barangay Batasan Hills where three security guards were easily disarmed by the robbers of their .38 caliber service revolvers.

The senior police officer further said that prior to the incident, witnesses recalled seeing a gray Tamaraw FX (TRS 505) circling the area. "This should have immediately alerted the security guards that something was about to happen and they should have asked the nearest police detachment for strategic deployment of personnel which could have thwarted the robbery," he said.

He said that prior to the heist, all QCPD units had been alerted against possible bank robberies in the area. The tight security employed around the different financial institutions may have prompted the robbers to look for an easier and unlikely target, the official pointed out.

The police found out yesterday that the robbers took P750,000 in cash, 15 checks of an undetermined amount and the cell phones of two Meralco employees.

Police investigators are looking into the possibility that the Resto Gang was behind the heist based on the organized manner by which the suspects executed the operation that took only 10 minutes.

But they have yet to match the features of the Meralco robbers with artist sketches of suspected Resto Gang members who previously victimized banks and commercial establishments in the city and other parts of Metro Manila.

Investigators are tracing the owner of the gray Tamaraw FX used in the robbery which was found abandoned on IBP Road in Filinvest I, several meters away from the Meralco office.

They are also conducting follow-up operations to track down the robbers who were reported to be hiding in the southern part of Metro Manila.

2 bodies found in QC vacant lot

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A VIGILANTE GROUP COULD BE BEhind the death of a man and a woman whose bodies were found in a grassy lot in Barangay Payatas-B, Quezon City yesterday morning, police said.

The cause of death, however, has yet to be determined as their bodies were already badly decomposed.

The two were found by a passerby who became curious about the stench coming from the grassy lot. On the woman's back was a sign which read: "Asset ako (I'm an asset)."

Supt. Edgardo Pamittan of the Quezon City Police District Batasan Hills Station 6, described the woman as between 25 and 28 years old, 5'1" in height and clad in a striped sleeveless shirt and denim pants.

The man was between 28 and 30 years old, 5'2" in height and dressed in a brown shirt and camouflage shorts.

Their mouths were gagged with what appeared to be strips taken from a garbage bag.

Pamittan said that the bodies may have been dumped on Sunday or Monday.

He added that the sign "Asset ako" probably meant that the woman was an informant for an illegal drug syndicate.

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Abductors ask ₱3M for release of actress' sis

By Tina G. Santos

THE PLOT THICKENS.

Former actress and model Rochelle Barrameda yesterday told the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) that she has received a ransom demand for the safe return of her sister who has been missing for over a week.

She added that the demand which she received through a text message, asked for P3 million in exchange for the release of Rubyrose Jimenez, 26, who disappeared the other Wednesday.

Assistant Regional Director Vicente de Guzman, chief of the NBI's Special Action Unit, said that while they were taking all information into consideration, they were not discounting the possibility that the text messages could be part of "diversionary tactics meant to mislead investigators."

Barrameda said they last saw Jimenez on March 14 before she went to a bank on board her green Mitsubishi Gallant car.

Barrameda said her sister's disappearance might have something to do with the complaint the latter filed against her estranged husband, Manuel Jimenez III.

De Guzman said that they had invited Manuel to the NBI for questioning.

Manuel, however, did not show up but sent his lawyer instead.

Police official still missing; QCPD counsel worried

By Jeannette I. Andrade

INVESTIGATORS OF THE QUEzon City Police District (QCPD) suspect the worse in the case of a police inspector who was reported to have been kidnapped by another police official and has not been seen since.

Traffic Management Group administrative officer, Supt. Rodrigo Bonifacio, who is believed to have kidnapped Chief Insp. Medel Pone on Feb. 1, has also not reported for work since he went on leave after the incident. However, he reportedly told his superior, TMG director Chief Supt. Errol Pan, that he would face the charges against him.

At the continuation yesterday of the preliminary investigation of the kidnapping charges filed against Bonifacio, Roger Yalung, a lawyer of the QCPD Criminal Investigation Unit said the fact that Pone has been missing for almost two months was a bad sign.

Pone may already have been killed by his abductors, he added, although this was hard to prove in the absence of a body. Bonifacio and three other men are accused of kidnapping Pone from the house of his girlfriend, Genevie Winters, in Quezon City.

REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
KAGAWARAN NG EDUKASYON
PROCUREMENT SERVICE
Room 508, 5th Floor, Mabini Bldg., DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City

DepED
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Telefax: 633-9343
Direct Line: 636-6542 to 43
Website: http://www.deped.gov.ph

Invitation for Bids (IFB)

Republic of the Philippines
Printing (from Camera-ready Materials) and Delivery of Textbooks and Teacher's Manuals
in English to Public Elementary School Districts and High Schools
NPSBE Loan No. 7393-PH and SEDIP Loan No. 1654 - PHI
IFB No. 1-2006-TX-TM-ENG

1. This Invitation for Bids follows the General Procurement Notice for this Project that appeared in Development Business issue no. 686 of September 16, 2006.
2. The Republic of the Philippines has received loans from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) toward the costs of the National Program Support for Basic Education (NPSBE) and the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project (SEDIP), respectively. It intends to apply part of the proceeds of these loans to payments under the Contract for the Printing (from Camera-ready Materials) and Delivery of Textbooks and Teacher's Manuals in English
3. The Department of Education (DepED) now invites sealed bids from eligible and qualified bidders for the printing from camera-ready-materials and delivery of textbooks and teacher's manuals indicated below to selected Public Elementary School Districts and High Schools nationwide.

Lot No.	Subject & Level (item)	Total (in copies)		Zone 1		Zone 2		Zone 3		Zone 4	
		TX	TM	TX	TM	TX	TM	TX	TM	TX	TM
	Elementary:										
1	English 1	2,713,241	76,621	507,616	13,912	840,525	24,062	570,352	15,628	794,748	23,019
	English 2	2,275,792	66,972	453,869	12,987	726,612	21,289	474,430	13,908	620,881	18,808
2	English 3 - L	2,125,000	62,369	438,251	12,349	686,117	20,199	445,824	12,905	554,808	16,916
	English 3 - R	2,125,000	-	438,251	-	686,117	-	445,824	-	554,808	-
	English 4 - L	2,054,395	60,271	428,058	12,031	668,402	19,722	438,778	12,513	519,157	16,005
	English 4 - R	2,054,395	-	428,058	-	668,402	-	438,778	-	519,157	-
3	English 6 - L	1,827,952	53,403	400,529	11,000	604,355	18,014	390,241	10,727	432,827	13,662
	English 6 - R	1,827,952	-	400,529	-	604,355	-	390,241	-	432,827	-
	Subtotal	17,003,727	319,636	3,495,161	62,259	5,484,885	103,286	3,594,468	65,681	4,429,213	88,410
	High School:										
4	English I	1,827,615	48,077	372,587	10,464	607,121	16,534	415,871	10,396	432,036	10,683
	English II	1,333,350	35,024	289,076	8,289	433,841	11,829	304,237	7,466	306,196	7,440
	English III	1,358,797	34,755	296,400	8,496	451,823	12,344	305,550	6,332	305,024	7,583
	English IV	1,196,768	30,761	265,445	7,668	399,627	10,918	266,722	5,428	264,974	6,747
	Subtotal	5,716,530	148,617	1,223,508	34,917	1,892,412	51,625	1,292,380	29,622	1,308,230	32,453
	Grand Total	22,720,257	468,253	4,718,669	97,176	7,377,297	154,911	4,886,848	95,303	5,737,443	120,863

Estimated Printing and Delivery Completion Period: 150 calendar days. Indicative Printing and Delivery Dates: July 2007 to November 2007.
Interested suppliers should have been in operation for a minimum of three years prior to the bid submission date, and an important part of their business must be in the manufacturing of printed and bound education materials, or as consolidators of educational materials.

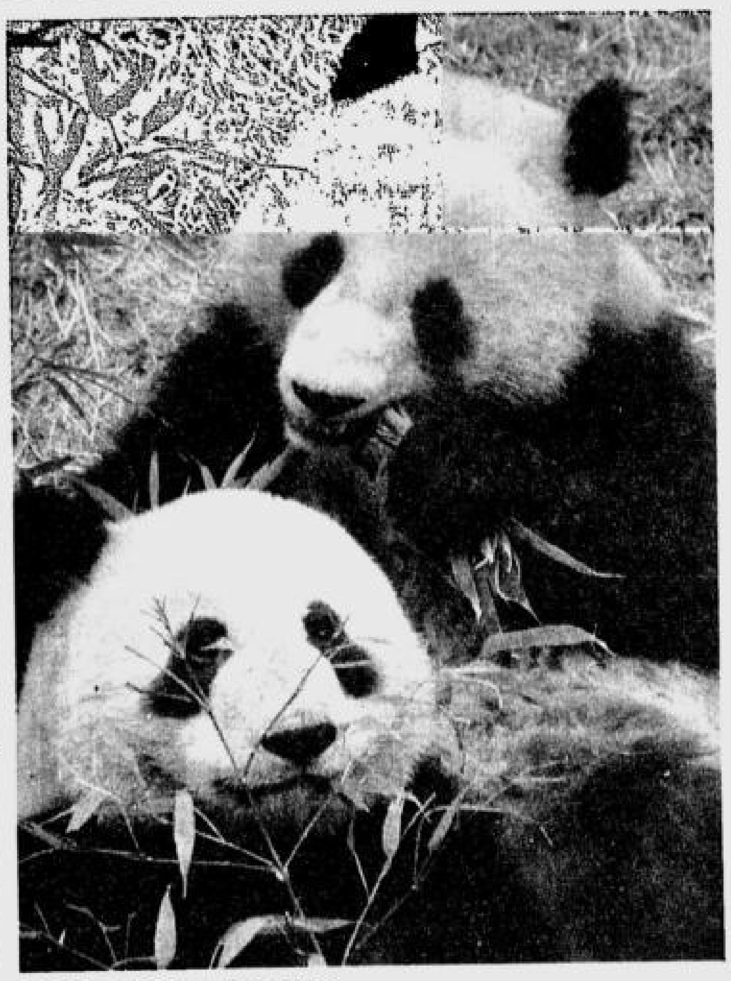
4. Bidding will be conducted through International Competitive Bidding (ICB) procedures specified in the World Bank's *Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits*, and is open to all bidders from Eligible Source Countries as defined in the Guidelines.
5. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from the Procurement Service, DepED, Bids and Awards Committee Chairperson, with e-mail deped_procurementservice@yahoo.com.ph and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Information is also available at http://www.deped.gov.ph and www.procurementservice.org or call DepED-PS at telephone no. (632) 636-65-43, 633-9343 or fax no. 636-65-42.
6. Qualification requirements include: *technical, financial, legal and other requirement* such as having successfully completed minimum of 2 similar contracts similar in size and scope in the last 5 years, demonstrate available cash flow arrangement equivalent to at least 75% of the amount of the proposed contract, valid business license, and list of printing and packing equipment. A margin of preference shall be granted to Textbooks manufactured in Purchaser's country for purposes of bid price comparison only. Additional details are provided in the Bidding Documents.
7. A complete set of Bidding Documents in English may be purchased by interested bidders upon submission of a written Application to the address below and payment of a non refundable fee in the amount of Php4,500.00 or US$85.00. The method of payment will be in cash, cashier's check or manager's check.
8. A pre-bid conference shall be conducted on April 10, 2007, 10:00 a.m., at the Bulwagan ng Karunungan, Rizal I Building, DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City, Philippines.
9. Bids must be submitted to the address below at or before 10:00 a.m. on May 4, 2007. Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend in person at the address below. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in an amount equivalent to at least 2.5% of the bid price, in Philippine Peso or in any freely convertible currency of eligible countries in the form provided in the Bid Data Sheet and/or Section IV. Bidding Forms.
10. The addresses referred to above are:
    1. For obtaining information and purchasing the Bidding Documents

       Procurement Service
       Department of Education
       Room 508, 5th Floor
       Mabini Building, DepED Complex
       Meralco Avenue, Pasig City
       Philippines 1600
       e-mail **deped_procurementservice@yahoo.com.ph**
    2. For Submission and Opening of Bids

       The Chairperson
       Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)
       Department of Education
       Bulwagan ng Karunungan
       Rizal I Building, DepED Complex
       Meralco Avenue, Pasig City
       Philippines 1600
11. DepED-BAC in consultation with the End-user, reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, to annul the bidding process, or declare failure of bidding at any time prior to contract award without thereby incurring any liability to the affected parties.

(Sgd.) RAMON C. BACANI
Undersecretary and Chairperson
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI--March 22, 2007)



HONG KONG-BOUND
A pair of pandas for Hong Kong—the male young panda presently identified as No. 606 (rear) and the female, No. 610—are seen together in the China Panda Protection and Research Center in Wolong, southwest China's Sichuan Province on Tuesday March 20. AP

Bush vows to resist subpoenas for aides in prosecutor storm

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT George W. Bush Tuesday vowed to resist any attempt by Congress to force top aides to testify under oath about a row over fired prosecutors, warning against a "partisan fishing expedition." In his boldest political language since Democrats seized Congress in November, Bush accused his opponents of using the escalating showdown to "score political points" and refused to back down.

Faced with a fierce new partisan fight as he tries to breath life into a second-term administration hobbled by the unpopular Iraq war, Bush warned: "we will not go along with a partisan fishing expedition." Earlier, the president personally endorsed Atty. Gen. Alberto Gonzales, who is facing calls for his ouster over the dismissal of eight prosecutors which critics claim was political motivated.

The White House also branded as "completely false" reports that it was already scouting for a replacement for Gonzales, a trusted member of Bush's Texas inner circle, desperate to thwart Democrats' demands for blood.

"I will oppose any attempts to subpoena White House officials," Bush said, throwing down the gauntlet for his Democratic foes.

The administration earlier agreed to let key figures in the drama, including Bush's top political advisor Karl Rove, meet congressional investigators, but not to testify under oath.

Bush did however admit the episode had been poorly handled following sometimes contradictory explanations of the prosecutor firings by various administration officials, though he noted it was within his power to dismiss US Attorneys.

But the Senate moved to ensure it has a say in filling US Attorney vacancies, voting 94-2 for legislation requiring that replacements be subject to its confirmation.

Bush offered to send Gonzales and his staff to testify before Congress and noted the administration had turned over 3,000 pages of documents in a bid to shed light on the reasons the US Attorneys were fired.

Bush raised the issue of executive privilege, the convention which is supposed to safeguard a president's capacity to receive candid counsel from advisors, saying aides should not fear being hauled before investigations.

But Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer refused to accept the White House reasoning, saying key figures must be forced to testify under oath.

"What is the objection to an oath? If there's nothing to hide and everyone is telling the truth, there should be no objection.

"What is the objection to having this discussion in public?" Schumer said on the Senate floor.

Bush's endorsement for Gonzales, whom he handpicked to be his lawyer in 1995 while still governor of Texas, came in an early morning call from the Oval Office, Bush's spokesperson Tony Snow said.

"He expressed his support for the attorney general and his strong backing," Snow told AFP by telephone.

Having been forced to remove defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld after the Republicans were routed in November congressional elections, the White House is desperate not to hand Democrats the scalp of another key administration figure.

Gonzales has also come under fire over an internal probe that found that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, part of his department, breached privacy laws in overzealously seeking access to information about terror suspects.

The head of the Justice Department's probe, Glenn Fine, said Tuesday he believed the FBI's violations were "serious and unacceptable." The controversy at the Justice Department is yet another blow to Bush, who has sunk to his lowest level in opinion polls.

In the past weeks the administration has been fending off scandals over the care of wounded soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, the conviction of a former White House aide for perjury and the prosecutors affair. *AFP*

Castro could return to work 'soon'—minister

HAVANA—FIDEL CASTRO, WHO has been recovering from intestinal surgery almost eight months ago, could resume a more active role in government work "soon," a top cabinet member said Tuesday.

"What we are expecting is that we will have him back (at work) with us, in a more active way, soon," Communist Party Politburo member and Basic Industry Minister Yadira Garcia told reporters.

Castro, 80, handed over power for the first time in more than four decades in July to his brother and regime number-two Raul Castro, 75, following the surgery.

"Our comandante is recovering, his recovery process is making progress," Garcia said. "I would say that he is already in the leadership that agrees on the main issues, and the country's most important decisions. And he also is very involved in all these areas: oil and energy, on which he always has been in the lead." "We have been receiving his direction, the instructions he gives, and the outlook is very good, very favorable," added Garcia, in an unusual level of detail on Castro's health, which Cuba regards as a state secret.

Speculation on Castro's health has at times appeared wild over the past several months; US officials at one stage suggesting that Washington's longtime nemesis had just days left to live.

Much to the chagrin of hardline Cuban exiles in Miami, who had prematurely danced on his grave, video footage of Castro broadcast on Jan. 30 showed him looking healthier and more alert than in the previous pictures released by Cuban authorities.

Bolivian President Evo Morales, a close Castro ally, said Monday that Fidel Castro would make his first public appearance since last year on April 28, at a meeting in Havana of leaders from the alternative development group Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), backed by Cuba.

"I think that was a remark President Evo (Morales) made, and he must have some basis on which to have made it," Garcia told reporters.

In Bogota, a photograph published Tuesday in a Colombian newspaper shows a lively Fidel Castro speaking with writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the newest evidence that the Cuban leader appears to be recovering well from surgery.

The picture in El Tiempo shows Castro speaking with the Colombian Nobel Prize-winning novelist, who visited Castro in Havana on March 12, in what appears to be a garden in a residence.

Dressed in a sweatshirt in red, white and blue Cuban colors, Castro is addressing Garcia Marquez, who is smiling and listening attentively.

On Monday Garcia Marquez told AFP that "Fidel is very well, better than many think." Castro has been mostly out of sight since turning over power July 31 to his brother. His lengthy convalescence has generated much speculation as to whether he will return to power, and if so, to what extent.

Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said in Portugal on Friday that Castro had gained weight and is exercising daily.

On July 16, when asked if Fidel would seek re-election in 2008, national assembly leader Ricardo Alarcon told journalists: "I am certain (Fidel Castro) will be in perfect condition to continue assuming this responsibility." *AFP*

IN THIS photo released by Colombia's newspaper El Tiempo and dated March 12, Cuba's President Fidel Castro talks to Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez in Havana. AP

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17

Strike over unpaid wages paralyzes Israel

JERUSALEM—ISRAEL'S MAIN workers union paralyzed the country on Wednesday, shutting down airports, government offices and other essential services in an open-ended general strike over unpaid wages.

Around 400,000 public workers went on strike at 9 a.m. after last-minute reconciliation efforts between the government and the Histadrut labor federation failed to resolve the row.

Government ministries, except for defense, shut their doors and stopped answering telephones. All border crossings were closed as the country's trains, planes and ports stopped running. Rubbish removal stopped and school buses ground to a halt.

Some even feared disruptions in the nation's water supply as the water authority scaled back operations to a minimum, the Yediot Aharanot newspaper reported.

But health and security services will operate as usual, as will banks and the stock exchange.

"We decided that the non-payment of wages to public servants must cease once and for all," Histadrut secretary general Ofer Eini told public radio.

Eini has vowed the strike will continue until all civil servants receive their wages.

Despite the union action, a plane carrying the English football team heading for Israel for a crucial Euro 2008 qualifier will be allowed to land at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport, an airport authority spokesperson told AFP.

Planes carrying the 5,000 English football fans due in Israel to cheer on their team will also be allowed to touch down, the Haaretz newspaper reported.

Tel Aviv bar owners who are eagerly awaiting an uptick in sales to hard-drinking English football fans breathed a collective sigh of relief, Israeli television reported.

Eini told the newspaper that he didn't want to spoil the fun or Israel's chances of advancing by forcing Saturday's match to be cancelled.

It is feared that the airport shutdown will hurt Israeli tourism ahead of the Passover holiday on April 2 and 3, when tens of thousands of Jews travel to Israel from around the world to commemorate the biblical exodus from Egypt.

Eini said the strike was being held to protest against unpaid salaries in the public sector. The union claims that around 3,700 employees in over 50 local and religious councils have gone without pay for months.

"It is unacceptable that in a properly-functioning country employees go to work and don't get paid," said Eini. "The prime minister promised a complete solution and when I say a complete solution, that means until the last employee (is paid)."

The Israeli interior ministry says the wages of only 600 employees who work for municipalities that have consistently failed to collect taxes and other fees from residents are in arrears.

Last month, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert averted another threatened strike by the union after he promised to resolve the unpaid wages crisis. *AFP*

Search continues for missing miners

ULYANOVSKAYA MINE, RUSSIA—Flags were flying at half-mast Wednesday across Russia as a search was on for three miners still missing after a gas explosion claimed 107 lives in Russia's worst mining disaster since the Soviet era.

President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday decreed a national day of mourning for Wednesday in memory of at least 175 people killed over the last four days in three separate disasters, also including a deadly fire and a plane crash.

A spokesperson for the emergency situations ministry told AFP that the bodies of 107 people had been recovered, while another 93 miners who were underground when the explosion occurred had been rescued.

"We're hoping to find more people alive," Russian Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu, who was dispatched by Putin to oversee rescue operations, told reporters at the site late Tuesday.

However, early Wednesday he admitted that the search could take up to three days more, the Interfax news agency reported.

At the Ulyanovskaya mine, located about 3,000 kilometers east of Moscow, hopes of finding miners still alive were low.

"The search is very difficult," said Sergei Cheremnov, a spokesperson for the governor of the region of Kemerovo, Russia's coal industry heartland where the mine is located, explaining that "there is bad ventilation, there is flooding and there was a lot of destruction."

Officials said that rescuers were working underground by hand and that divers were also being pressed into service in flooded sections of the mine.

Gennady Melnikov, a representative of the local branch of the emergency situations ministry, said rescuers working through the night had encountered scenes of carnage underground.

"A lot of people died and when we brought them up, they were all dismembered," said Melnikov, who looked exhausted as he stood drinking tea at an improvised encampment of emergency workers by the mine shaft.

Search and rescue operations were being conducted under tight security. About 30 OMON riot police backed by regular local police were posted around the facility.

In the mining town of Novkuznetsk, which has a population of some 600,000 people, families watched in tears as ambulances delivered loads of black body bags to a morgue .

Putin ordered Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov to lead an investigation into the tragedy, as well as into the deaths overnight Tuesday of 62 people at a retirement home in southern Russia and an air crash on Saturday that killed seven.

Prosecutors opened a criminal inquiry into violation of safety rules at Ulyanovskaya, which is operated by the firm Yuzhkuzbassugol that owns a dozen other mines in the region.

However, the mine was said by officials to be equipped with some of the most modern safety equipment available and was a showpiece for an initial public stock offering (IPO) planned for this year.

Yuzhkuzbassugol is a subsidiary of Russian metals giant Evraz.

The explosion occurred as the bulk of the mine's management was underground accompanying a visiting British auditor reported to be inspecting the facility in connection with the planned IPO.

The Ulyanovskaya mine, which was opened five years ago, is located on a hill surrounded by a pine forest in a landscape dotted with chimneystacks and conveyor belts. *AFP*

RELATIVES of miners who perished in Monday's coal mine explosion react in the Siberian town of Novokuznetsk, some 230 km south of the regional center of Kemerovo, March 21. REUTERS

N. Korea demands money before talks

BEIJING—NORTH KOREAN NUclear disarmament talks stalled again on Wednesday as Pyongyang refused to come to the negotiating table until $25 million in frozen funds were back in its coffers.

Planned meetings of the chief envoys to the six-nation talks on Wednesday morning did not take place, officials involved in the negotiations said, as North Korea insisted it would not talk until the money was safely returned.

"It is difficult for me at the moment to predict when the plenary meeting among the chief delegates will open today," chief South Korean envoy Chun Yung-Woo told reporters.

"It depends on North Korea … If North Korea keeps insisting that it should not take part in the discussions at all before the transfer of the money, it will be difficult to have the plenary talks."

Authorities in Macau, where the money has been frozen since 2005 due to US accusations of North Korean money laundering and counterfeiting, said this week it would be released to a North Korean bank account.

But no one involved in the process has said when this will take place.

North Korea has repeatedly said it will not begin implementing a six-nation disarmament accord signed on Feb. 13 until the money is safely back in its hands.

The United States announced on Monday, at the start of the latest round of six-nation talks, that it had struck a deal with North Korea to end the dispute and the frozen money would be returned.

The United States insisted that it had received assurances from North Korea that the money would be used only for "humanitarian and educational purposes," however officials from Pyongyang have not said where the funds will go. *AFP*

Ecuador Congress replaces fired lawmakers

QUITO—ECUADOR'S CONGRESS replaced fired lawmakers and convened on Tuesday in an apparent victory for President Rafael Correa over opposition legislators resisting his plans to curb their influence.

Correa, a left-winger elected in November, has been locked in a power struggle with lawmakers since March 7, when a court sacked 57 of them from the 100-member chamber for obstructing his plans for a referendum on rewriting the constitution.

The fired lawmakers had said they would seek to take their seats in the building, which was ringed by hundreds of police wielding batons to prevent a repeat of last week's clashes when opposition members tried to force their way inside.

But Congress President Jorge Cevallos on Tuesday swore in 21 substitutes and allowed the legislature to hold a session without the fired lawmakers.

"We will obey the will of the people," substitute lawmaker Cesar Alonso said. Congress needs at least 51 lawmakers to hold a session and 55 were present.

Correa was monitoring developments and "hopes that Congress will start working in line with the people's demands," a government spokesperson said.

Fired lawmakers accused Correa of bribing their substitutes and vowed to reclaim their seats. They could still appeal the court's decision and try to reverse it, experts said.

"We have to tell the world that a bribed Congress will never work," said Gloria Gallardo, a fired opposition lawmaker.

"They want an obedient Congress to bypass scrutiny." Elected in November, Correa is popular for promising to sweep away the influence of traditional political parties whom many Ecuadoreans blame for the instability that has ousted three presidents in the last decade. *Reuters*

Glass-bottomed Skywalk opens over Grand Canyon

ASTRONAUT Buzz Aldrin and other VIP guests take the ceremonial first steps on the Skywalk at Grand Canyon West on the Hualapai Indian Reservation in Arizona, March 20. The $30 million glass-bottomed walkway juts out 70 feet from the rim at an evelation of 4,000 feet above the Colorado River. AFP

HUALAPAI INDIAN RESERVATION, Arizona—A gleaming glass-bottomed walkway that juts out over the edge of the Grand Canyon welcomed its first visitors here Tuesday, with Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin taking one small step for man and one almighty leap for sufferers of vertigo.

The Skywalk, a horseshoe-shaped observation deck extending 21 meters over the western lip of the vast natural chasm in the remote Hualapai Indian Reservation, about 193 kilometers east of Las Vegas, Nevada, allows tourists to peer straight down a dizzying 1,220 meters to the canyon floor below through 10-centimeter thick reinforced glass.

"It felt wonderful," said Aldrin, the second man to set foot on the moon after Neil Armstrong in the 1969 mission, after strolling around the walkway with members of the Hualapai tribe. "Not exactly floating on air or walking in space, but it was wonderful. It wasn't the least bit disturbing—at least not for some of us."

The Hualapai hope the Skywalk will help bring valuable tourist dollars to their impoverished corner of the Grand Canyon.

Architects say the gravity-defying structure is capable of supporting several hundred people simultaneously and will not be affected by powerful winds that often roar through the Grand Canyon.

Weighing roughly 500 tons, the walkway is constructed with layer upon layer of reinforced glass and is supported by massive steel bolts that have been driven 14 meters into surrounding bedrock. Giant shock absorbers also will prevent the structure from quivering under the weight of visitors, architects say.

The project, which took two years to complete, is the latest example of Native American tribes seeking to generate income through tourism. The Hualapai are hoping that the Skywalk will persuade visitors to come to their remote section of the Grand Canyon, which previously struggled to lure tourists with its Old West-style villages and tours.

The Skywalk was dreamed up by Shanghai-born businessman David Jin. The Las Vegas-based investor is reported to have bankrolled construction of the $30-million project and under a deal with the Hualapai will collect up to half of the revenues from ticket sales over the next 25 years to recoup his investment.

Tickets for the Skywalk, which opens to the public on March 28, will cost about $25.

But construction of the project has been criticized by some Hualapai members and environmentalists, with several tribal members telling AFP here Tuesday they had mixed feelings about the project.

"I'd say most Hualapai are opposed to it," said Don Havatone, 46, a tour guide. "It's hard to accept. It's sacred ground for us and we are disturbing it. But on the other hand I think people will grow to accept it if they can see that our children will benefit from tourism." Wilfred Whatoname, meanwhile, said he was dismayed that the Skywalk had been built overlooking Eagle Point, a dramatic geological formation shaped like a swooping eagle. According to ancient tribal beliefs, the spirit of the Hualapai's ancestors rises upwards from the gorges surrounding the landmark.

"It's taking away from our Eagle, our sacred land," said Whatoname. "I was opposed to it. But now I think we have to accept it it is going to provide jobs for our children."

Charlie Vaughn, the chairman of the Hualapai tribal council, said members of the tribe had not complained when the project was first mooted. *AFP*

Singapore woman jailed for online dating scam

SINGAPORE—A MARRIED Singaporean woman who met a man in an online chatroom and conned him into giving her about $45,000 after she promised to marry him, was jailed for six months on Monday, court documents showed.

Maliha Ramu, 36, used a false name and photographs of Bollywood actress Gayatri Joshi when she began an online relationship with Bharani Indran, an Indian national living in the United States, according to the Straits Times newspaper.

After Ramu promised in 2004 to marry Indran, she asked him to send her a total of about $45,000 for her mother's funeral expenses and for a friend's wedding, according to the court documents.

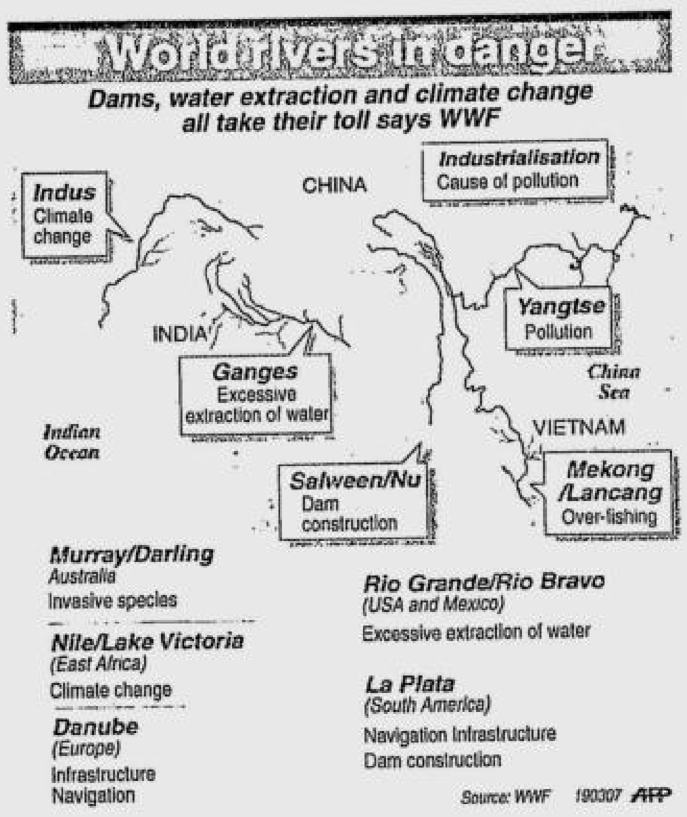
Indran eventually grew suspicious of Ramu when she asked for more money and filed a police report in Singapore, the Straits Times said. The paper added that Ramu's husband had no idea she had struck up an online relationship until the police came to their apartment to arrest her in August. *Reuters*

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

5 Asian rivers at risk of dying

GENEVA—FIVE RIVERS IN ASIA SERVING OVER 870 MILLION PEOPLE ARE among the most threatened in the world, as dams, water extraction and climate change all take their toll, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said.


World rivers in danger

Dams, water extraction and climate change all take their toll says WWF

Source: WWF 190307 AFP

The Yangtze, Salween-Nu, Indus, Ganges and Mekong-Lancang rivers make up half of the WWF's "top ten" most threatened river basins, which "either already suffer most grievously under the weight of these threats or are bracing for the heaviest impacts," the organization said.

Also on the list are the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo and La Plata in Latin America, the Danube in central Europe, the Nile-Lake Victoria in Africa and the Murray-Darling in Australia.

"Nearly everybody in the world lives in a river basin and everybody has a contribution to make" to prevent further environmental damage, the director of WWF's Global Freshwater Program Jamie Pittock told AFP.

The threats facing river basins are varied and interlinked, and require holistic policies rather than efforts that target just one aspect but can end up being counterproductive, he said.

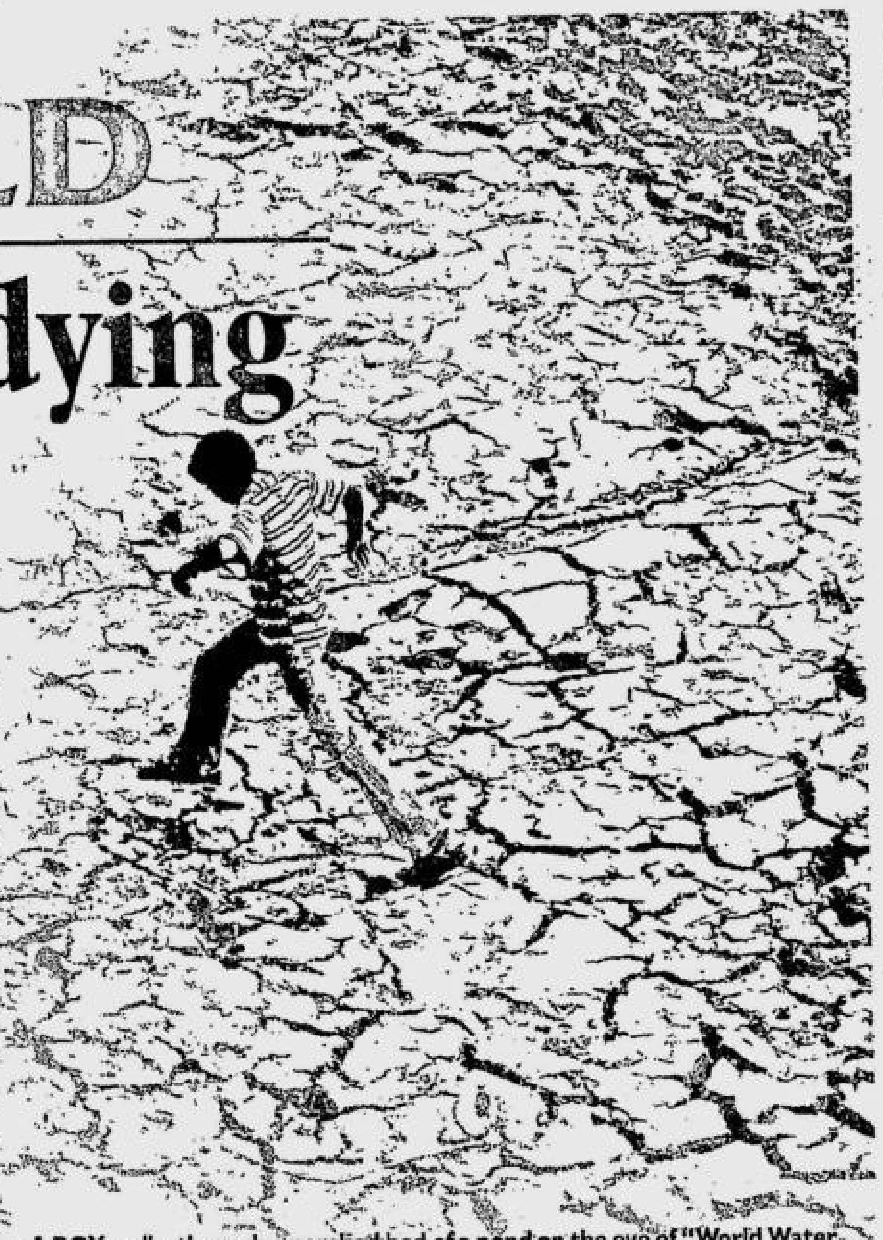
For example, "as governments become concerned about climate change reducing water run-off, they build more dams to store more water, which then results in more water being extracted from the rivers and so builds up more ecological problems," Pittock said.

Many governments are also focusing on hydro-electric power plants as a "clean" source of energy, but this means more dams which stem water flows and kill off fish populations, he added.

The WWF report highlighted water extraction, dams, and climate change as the most wide-ranging threats that will have the most impact on people, though invasive species and pollution also pose serious problems.

This is particularly the case for China's Yangtze river basin, where decades of heavy industrialization, damming, and huge influxes of sediment from land conversion have made it one of the world's most polluted rivers, the WWF said.

Over-fishing is the main threat facing the Mekong, while dams and infrastructure projects imperil freshwater habitats in the Salween, La Plata and Danube basins, the report added. *AFP*


A BOY walks through a parched bed of a pond on the eve of "World Water Day" in Hyderabad, India, Wednesday, March 21 AP

Largest urban forest threatened

MUMBAI—A PROTECTED JUNGLE billed as the world's largest urban national park in India's financial capital is being encroached, built over and damaged as a rapidly growing city takes a toll on the forest's diverse flora and fauna.

Almost 30 times bigger than New York's Central Park, the Sanjay Gandhi National Park on the northern rim of Mumbai is home not only to about 20 adult leopards and hundreds of kinds of animals and birds, but also about 200,000 people, many of whom are involved in illegal forest activities.

As India observed World Forestry Day on Wednesday, authorities and experts expressed concern at the development of new residential blocks that have blurred the distinction between the city and the countryside to accommodate Mumbai's expanding population of 17 million.

"To save this green lung of Mumbai the forest has to be rid of encroachers, and building activities around it have to be monitored," said Kailash Birari, the national park's assistant conservator.

"This is the world's largest national park within city limits and it is unique and vital." The effects of urban development on the 104 sq km (40 sq mile) forest are easy to see.

In 2004, at least 14 people were killed in attacks by leopards in Mumbai after their shrinking habitat forced them to stray from the national park and enter nearby neighborhoods.

At least 47 straying leopards were caught in 2004 and 2005 and plans are afoot to release them in the wild with electromagnetic chips in their tails so that they could be tracked and permanently locked up if they attacked people again.

It is illegal to kill leopards, an endangered species in Africa and Asia often hunted for their fur.

The Mumbai national park's predicament is part of a larger problem facing India which is struggling to save its forests and endangered animals such as the tiger. *Reuters*

Global warming set to deepen thirst for water

PARIS—FRESH WATER, THE STUFF of life, is set to become even more precious as global warming begins to bite, experts warn ahead of World Water Day on Thursday.

The theme of this year's event is water scarcity, a problem familiarly driven by population explosion, chronic wastage and pollution.

The UN estimates that, by 2025, two-thirds of the planet's population will be living with water stress, with North Africa, the Middle East and West Asia the worst-afflicted regions.

But global warming is bound to accentuate the scarcity, say experts.

In many regions, greater aridity, shifting rainfall patterns and dwindling runoff from snow and ice in mountains may badly deplete rivers, lakes and aquifers.

In contrast, other regions will get more rainfall—but this may take the form of fierce rainstorms that cause flash floods rather than a useful drizzle that soaks into the ground.

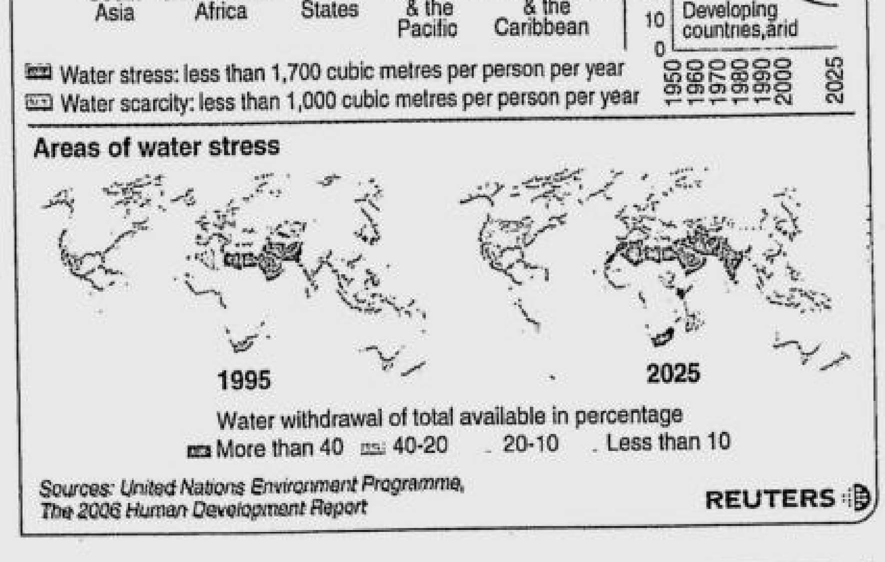
Or the precious stuff may fall in areas that are sparsely populated or where there is no infrastructure for capturing and storing it for use during dry spells.

Scientists in the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are due to highlight the phenomenon in a report, due to be released in Brussels on April 6. It is the second volume in a long-awaited assessment on global warming.

In higher latitudes and some wet tropics, including populous areas of East and Southeast Asia, water availability is "very likely" to increase over this century, according to the latest draft of the report, seen by AFP.

But countries in the mid-latitudes and dry tropics, which are already water-stressed, would have less water.

"Drought-affected areas will likely increase and extreme precipitation events, which are likely to increase in frequency and intensity, will augment flood risk," according to the document, which is still being finalized. *AFP*


This year's theme for World Water Day, which falls on Thursday, is 'coping with water scarcity'

It highlights the increasing significance of water scarcity worldwide and the need to step up integration and cooperation to ensure sustainable, efficient and equitable management of scarce water resources

Sources: United Nations Environment Programme, The 2006 Human Development Report

REUTERS

HOME DEVELOPMENT MUTUAL FUND

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Provision of Air Conditioning Units at Pag-IBIG Fund Branch Offices and Corporate Headquarters

The **Pag-IBIG Fund**, through its Bids and Awards Committee on Goods and Services (BAG-GS) intends to apply the sum of Four Million Seven Hundred Sixty-Five Thousand Five Hundred Seventeen Pesos and 13/100 (Php 4,765,517.13) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Provision of Air Conditioning Units at the following Pag-IBIG Fund offices:

- Imus Branch, OLMA Building, Aguinaldo Highway, Imus, Cavite
- Makati Branch, Justine Building, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City
- Corporate Headquarters Room 222-223, Atrium Building, Makati Ave., Makati City

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

The Pag-IBIG Fund now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the Provision of Air Conditioning Units at above Branches/Offices. Delivery of the GOODS is required 8 weeks from receipt of the Notice to Proceed. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary PASS/FAIL criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualfiication procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the BAC-GS Secretariat, Room 704, Atrium of Makati, Makati Ave., Makati City, and inspect the Bidding Documents from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. starting March 22, 2007.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the BAC-GS Secretariat, Room 704, Atrium of Makati, Makati Ave., Makati City and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Four Thousand Pesos (P4,000.00) to the Pag-IBIG Fund Cashier. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The **Pag-IBIG Fund** will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on March 29, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. at Room 602, Arnel Taduran Hall, Atrium of Makati, Makati Ave., Makati City.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered on or before April 10, 2007, 9:00 a.m. to the BAC-GS Secretariat at Room 704, Atrium of Makati, Makati Ave., Makati City. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form and in the amount indicated in Section III of the Bidding Documents, Bid Data Sheet. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Bid opening shall be on April 10, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. at Room 602, Arnel Taduran Hall, Atrium of Makati, Makati Ave., Makati City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.

The Pag-IBIG Fund reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

For further inquiries and/or information, please call Messrs. Wilfrido Nacito S. Reyes and Jose Maria M. Diaz at 8114262, 8945815 or visit our Corporate Website at http://www.pagibigfund.gov.ph or e-mail us at gsd@pagibigfund.gov.ph.

(Sgd.) **EMMA LINDA B. FARIA**
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(PDI—March 22, 2007)

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WHAT'S INSIDE
Harbour gets Chot invite; Nwosu due /A27

Tiger, Federer play in Miami—but not against each other /A29

Solis ready to shock the world

MEXICAN JORGE SOLIS, BRACING FOR the fight of his life, will have gone through the best training available when he battles the iconic Manny Pacquiao at the Alamodome on April 14 in San Antonio, Texas.

The lanky Solis (32-0-2, 23 KOs) of Guadalajara, Mexico will try to wrest the World Boxing Council international super featherweight title of Pacquiao (43-3-2, 33 KOs) in the main event of the pay-per-view extravaganza dubbed "Blaze of Glory" and promoted by Top Rank Inc.

"I know people are saying Pacquiao is in for an easy fight, but I'm undefeated

SOLIS/ A27

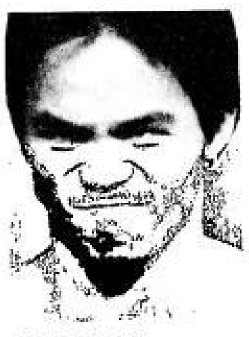
Marquez must square off vs Pacquiao first—WBC

NEW WORLD BOXING COUNCIL SUper featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez should first face Manny Pacquiao before taking on Marco Antonio Barrera in a rematch.

"Rules are rules, and definitely state that there must be a mandatory defense, and we are going to push for that. The next fight for Juan Manuel Marquez will be against Manny Pacquiao if Manny defeats Jorge Solis," declared WBC president Jose Sulaiman in a talk with James Blears of Boxingscene yesterday.

This development came on the heels of reports that Golden Boy Promotions has sought a court injunction to stop Pacquiao's scheduled fight against the undefeated Mexican Solis on April 14 at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas.

MARQUEZ



PACQUIAO

But a noted US boxing expert who is a lawyer called the chance of the fight being scuttled by the courts as "slim and none."

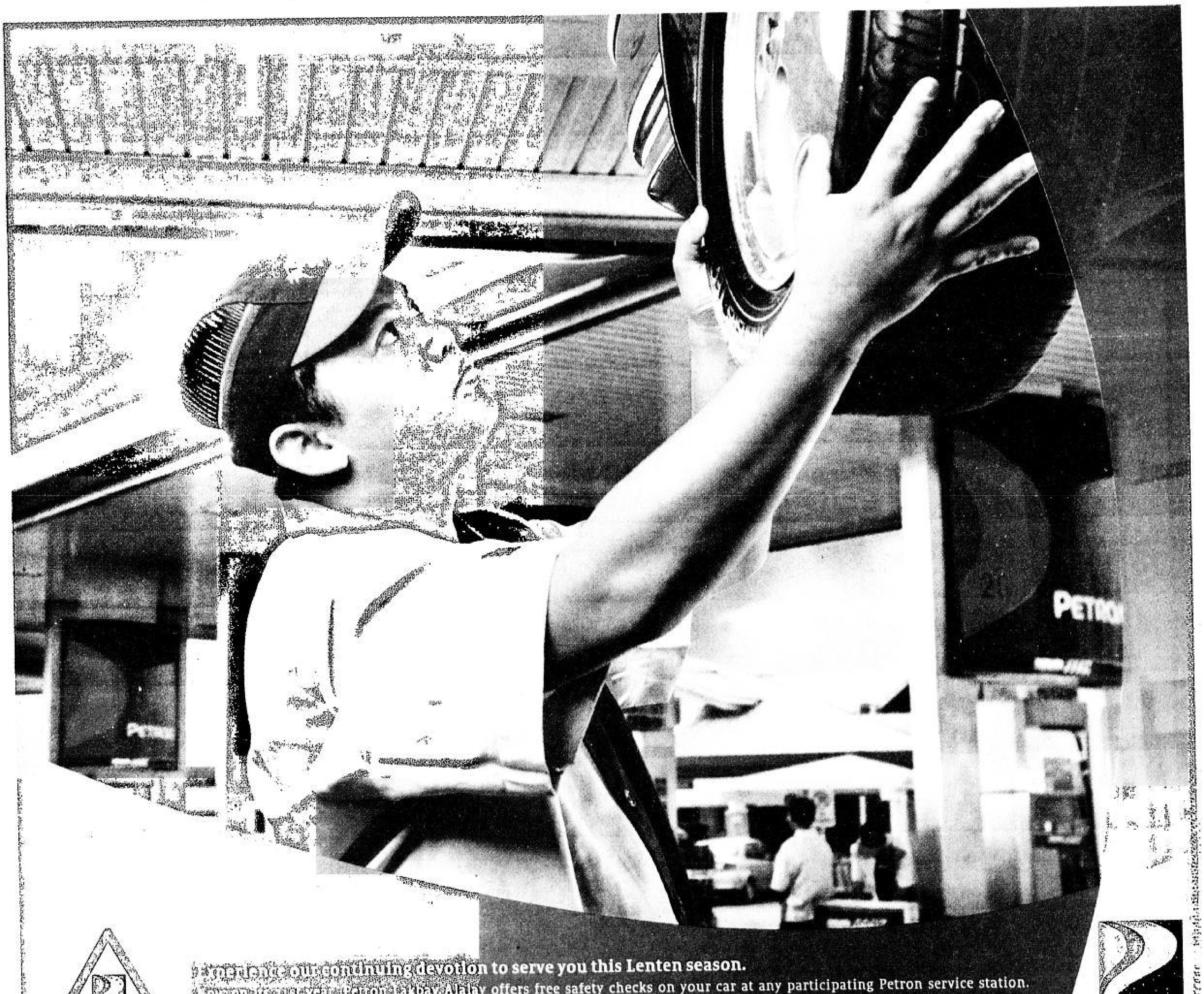
"The chances are slim and none and, as the old line goes, slim is out of town. No judge is going to prevent Pacman from earning a living because of the ongoing legal dispute over his promotional rights between Oscar De La Hoya and Bob Arum," wrote Boxingconfidential's resident lawyer and editor Michael Marley.

He warned, however, that although the injunction may not halt the bout altogether, it might affect other aspects of the promotion.

"The Top Rank card will go on as scheduled April 14 although the news about GBP's seeking to put a screeching halt to the card may hurt Arum with potential sponsors and other third parties who do not want to get dragged into the matter," Marley said.

"There is also a chance that GBP could get some of Top Rank's income from the PPV show in Texas tied up," added Marley, a veteran observer of the fight scene.

MARQUEZ/ A27



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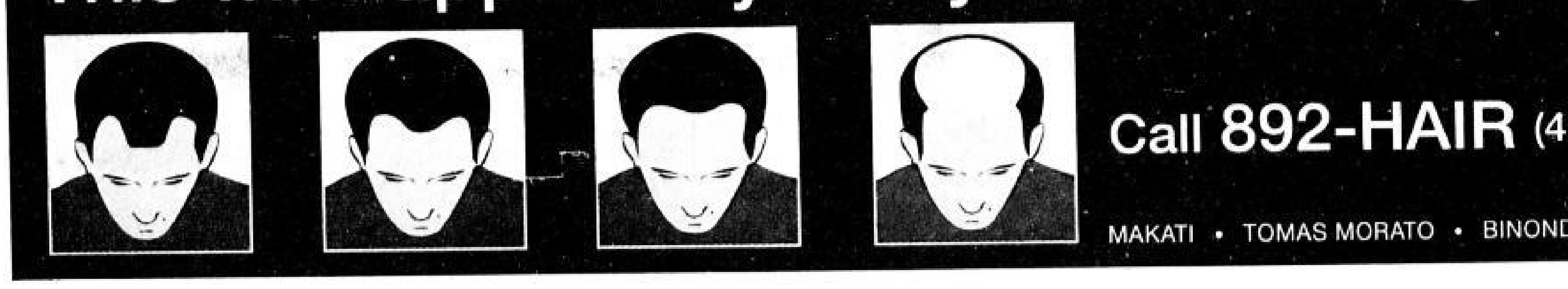

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Eagle meet starts Int'l Pairs elims

THE PHILIPPINE ELIMINATIONS FOR THE Lufthansa International Pairs tournament start on Saturday with members of the giant Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club in Gen. Trias, Cavite, disputing the first finals slot.

More than 30 member-member pairs have signed up for the first of a series of 18-hole qualifiers leading to the grand finals which Eagle Ridge will also host on May 29.

Lufthansa will be flying the Philippine pair and its entourage

to St. Andrews in Scotland for the world finals where they will compete against 35 countries on July 1-3.

"We're delighted to have obtained good response from private clubs and we're looking forward to an exciting summer of International Pairs events," said Felix Cortez, part of last year's winning pair who is now the event licensee for Asia.

Cortez recently forged an agreement with Lufthansa for the European carrier to title sponsor the inaugural Philippine qualifier of the International Pairs.

Lufthansa will also raffle off a trip to St. Andrews, Scotland for all the participants of the tourney. Another major backer, Callaway through its local distributor Electrobus Consolidated, will provide gift certificates to all the entries before tee off.

Aside from the once-in-a-lifetime chance to fly to Scotland and play in the renowned home of golf for free, the main attraction of the International Pairs is its format (best-ball with handicap) which gives everybody an equal chance at winning.

Other clubs which have scheduled their respective qualifiers are Iloilo (April 14), Alabang (April 21), Canlubang (April 28) and Royal Northwoods (May 5).

"For duffers or weekend players, playing at St. Andrews and wearing the national colors against rival countries in an Olympic atmosphere are goals that seem so hard to reach, an impossible dream," said tournament director Andy Dumlao. "The International Pairs will bring them closer to that dream."

For inquiries, call Primeline Events Management at 8342444 look for JoAnne or Pam.

DOTTIE Ardina reacts after missing a putt at hole No. 9. RYAN LIM

RP 4 behind Koreans in Sirikit Cup

By Musong R. Castillo

STA. ROSA, LAGUNA—Regina de Guzman has been labeled a promising talent for so long that she could not wait to finally don a Philippine uniform.

And she did not waste the first chance she got.

The 15-year-old rookie internationalist fired a steady one-under-par 71 in difficult conditions yesterday and became the surprise spearhead as host Philippines stayed in the thick of the fight after 18 holes of the 29th Queen Sirikit Cup.

"I'm so happy that I shot the round that I did because I was so eager to play (at the start of the day)," De Guzman told the Inquirer. "But more than the individual score, I'm happy that we are in third and within range.

"We (RP Team) will get better (in the rounds) tomorrow and the next."

Dottie Ardina, the pocket-sized 13-year-old who is the veteran in the team, shot a level 72 at wind-swept The Country Club as the Philippines took third with a 143 total under the three-to-play, two-to-count format.

Ryu So-yeon, the Asian Games gold medalist in Doha, Qatar last year, sizzled with a 69 and Choi He-yong added a 70 to propel the rock-solid Korean squad to a 139 aggregate and a one-shot lead over Australia.

Stephanie Na matched Ryu's 69 and Emma Bennet added a 70 for Australia. A stroke behind the Philippines was New Zealand whose 144 was built around Dasom Lee's 70 and Penny Newbrook's 74.

"Anything can still happen," Ardina told the Inquirer in Filipino. "The course was very trying today and we all felt how hard it played. If we can gain ground tomorrow by getting two under par scores, then I think we have a great chance."

Crystal Superal, the third RP bet, struggled with an 84.

The Philippines has never won this event also known as the Asia-Pacific Ladies team championship and the country's chances this year have been laid down on the shoulders of the three teeners who are showing that they are up to the task.

De Guzman, who was a marker for Jayvie Agojo during the Southeast Asian Games in 2005, finished with birdies on 16 and 17. She had a total of five birds for the day against four bogeys, three of them coming on the front side.

Ardina was one under until she bogeyed No. 18, where she missed the green by 50 yards then flubbed an eight-footer for par.

Ryu, who was 29-under-par in winning the Doha gold medal, birdied two of her first four holes on the back nine and finished birdie-birdie-par for that 69 which put her in front of the individual race together with Na.

Reigning RP Ladies' champion Yupaporn Kawinpakorn was only good for a 78 that counted behind Thidapa Suwannapura's 71 as Thailand found itself 10 strokes off the pace with a 149.

The Taiwanese never got it going, ending up 14 shots off in ninth spot with a 153 after Yeh Ko-Chen carded a 76 and Hsieh Yu-Ling a 77.

REGINE de Guzman: Unfamiliar role. RYAN LIM

2ND YOUNG MARKET MASTERS AWARDS
ymma

From left to right: Josiah Go (Founder, YMMA) & Chiqui Escareal-Go (President & Chief Advocacy Officer, Mansmith & Fielders Inc.), Monette Aldovino-De Joya (Advisory Account Manager, Innove), Carla Chavez (Senior Brand Manager, Alaska Milk), Bing Tecson (Category Manager, Lamoiyan), Dondi Gomez (Category Director & Head of Marketing Training, Unilever), Candice Alabanza-Iyog (VP for Marketing & Product, Cebu Pacific Air), Aurora Mangubat-Suarez (Publisher, Summit Media), Jane Basas (Senior Marketing Manager, Smart)

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Congratulations to the young marketing achievers.

The Young Market Masters Awards (YMMA) seeks to acknowledge the country's outstanding marketing and sales managers who are 35 years old and below. It aims to encourage and motivate bright, young minds to be innovative brand-builders and excel in the competitive world of marketing. This year, YMMA is proud to present seven young achievers who can inspire the youth to reach new heights in marketing and entrepreneurship.

Awards night: March 22, 2007 Mandarin Oriental Hotel Ballroom

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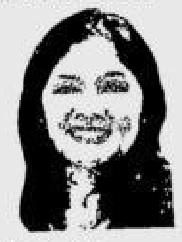
'I'll exile myself if we return with nothing'

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

TO MY DISMAY, my blood sugar had plummeted to hypoglycemic levels when I awoke trembling early Tuesday morning. The glucometer flashed: "Danger call doctor." The reading was 49 mgdl, way below the normal level.

Lest I passed out, I immediately downed a glassful of sweet orange juice and munched on a couple of tasteless crackers to boost my sugar level. Despite my condition, I was determined to keep my appointments that day.

Feeling better by 10 a.m., I started out for the Pantalan Restaurant at the Luneta to catch the PSA forum where the RP-Harbour Centre team bound for Jakarta, Indonesia for the Seaba Champions Cup qualifier was going to be presented.

***

The guests, led by Harbour Centre owner Mikee Romero, came in full force. The entourage included PBL commissioner Chino Trinidad and his executive staff Tommy Ong and Butch Maniego, PBL chairman Gil Angeles of Toyota Otis, team manager Bernard Yang, head coach Junel Baculi and assistants Jorge Gallent, Louie Alas, Lawrence Tiongson and Jun Noel and the players.

Erick Arejola, one of the two appointed team managers, couldn't make it because his wife was scheduled to give birth that day.

Everyone was thrilled that BAP-SBP president Manny V. Pangilinan had accepted the invitation to join the group, a gesture that he was giving the amateurs his support and blessing. It was the first time the telecommunications magnate appeared in a sports forum.

***

The guests were upbeat. Everyone was excited about the country's very first international competition following two years of suspension by the Fiba.

In no uncertain terms, MVP made it clear that the only option was to win, while Chino expressed full confidence on his players, saying that he expects them to bring home the bacon.

With his reputation at stake, having been tagged as the new godfather of Philippine basketball, Mikee swore he would exile himself to Nigeria with import Julius Nwosu should the Harbour team return empty-handed.

"Let's bring back the glory," he said, as he appealed for the full support of media and all concerned.

Because there were so many questions raised, the lively session stretched way past 12 noon.

And because everyone was looking very hungry, Mikee decided to treat all those left behind for lunch at the nearby Emerald Garden.

The invitation was extended to MVP but he begged off because he had a previous commitment. Instead, MVP promised to treat us to lunch at a popular restaurant in Jakarta where gourmet food is served.

***

Had we known that Mikee was celebrating his birthday the following day, we would've brought a cake with 36 candles at his luncheon blowout. I think I know exactly what he's going to wish for when he blows those candles.

***

By the time I got home that day, I was tired but my sugar level had shot up for sure.

After the sumptuous lunch at Emerald Garden, we proceeded to the 27th floor of the Diamond Hotel where the official contract signing for the television coverage of the Manny Pacquiao-Jorge Solis fight at the Alamodome between Solar and GMA 7 was going to be held.

There was one question majority or perhaps all of the media wanted answered, but they were disappointed. They wanted to know how much Pacquiao was going to be paid for the coverage, the pay-per view—and other related matters.

Solar COO Peter Chanliong said it was a business secret. He made it clear though, that Pacman was "worth every penny of it," but that Solar's marketing department will have to work double time to at least break even with that kind of investment.

Not everyone happy with PBA 'gaming'

By Musong R. Castillo

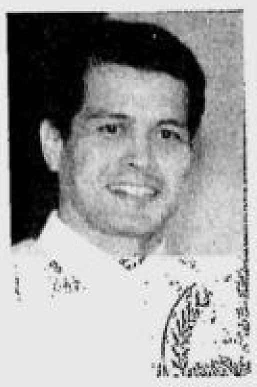
WHETHER IT'S FOR FUN AND IT'S INteractive or not, gaming that will involve money in the Philippine Basketball Association does not sit well with those who share pure love for the game.

Most people believe that it will destroy the purity of the game and that the sport—and the league for that matter—can stand on it s own.

"Let's just enjoy the gam e," four-time PBA MVP Alvin Patrimonio told the INQUIRER last night. "Whether it is P1 or P100,000, anytime you place money on the table, it is still considered a form of gambling.

"We need to work hard for our money, not earn it through other means."

The INQUIRER moved around at the Araneta Coliseum last night while a regular double header of the Fiesta Cup was going on, and asked around for reactions of some fans and those who know the game and the league well regarding the newest money-making machine of the league.



PATRIMONIO

BERNARDINO

"It's not a good idea in my opinion," said Felicitas Francisco, the Physical Education directress at Santo Tomas and a member of the UAAP board. "Whether this is gaming or gambling, it will reach the students in one way or another.

"This definitely won't be good to our youth," she added. "Besides, there is already too much of gambling going around in other ways that it wouldn't hurt if (the sport of) basketball is left alone."

Together with the Philippine Amusements and Gaming Corporation (Pagcor), the PBA launched on Sunday a betting game called "Hula Hoops," a game that involves numbers derived from the results of PBA games.

An electronics-based game that could produce extra income for the government and the PBA, "Hula Hoops" has two games: Winning Digits and Point Spread.

Interested persons can join by buying an eGames prepaid cards then texting their entries. Cards are available in P100, P500 and P1,000 denominations in various outlets. Each entry combination costs P10. A texter will just predict the last digit of the scores of the leading team per quarter in Winning Digits.

Winning entries in Winning Digit are worth P55,000 for first to fourth quarters, P5,500 for second to fourth quarters and P550 for third to fourth.

"In my own opinion, prudence dictates that the PBA stay away from it," said retired PBA commissioner Jun Bernardino over the phone. "Gaming per se has no problem, but the word has so many negative connotations.

"It will be hard to explain what differences the words gaming and gambling have and it will illicit a lot of negative reactions."

Bernardino recalled a time during his term when he and his staff had thought of coming up with a game that would legalize the "ending" game going on in the streets.

But one ride in an elevator inside a posh hotel to attend a meeting and with the operator asking him on what the "winning ending" combination would be for the coming games made him change his mind and ditch the idea altogether.

"I am not in a position to condemn the PBA," Bernardino said. "But I would rather that the PBA, it being the PBA, not get involved (in any form of gambling)."

"Hula Hoops" will go on for the duration of the Fiesta Cup.

Harbour gets Chot invite; Nwosu due

By Jasmine W. Payo

HARBOUR CENTRE-PHILIPPINES IS READY TO ROLL up its sleeves and buckle down to serious work with 6-foot-8 import Julius Nwosu expected to arrive late this week and with national coach Chot Reyes extending an invitation to the PBL selection to join the RP squad practices.

NWOSU: Either Friday or Saturday.

Reyes, who handles the country's preparation for a shot at an Olympic berth, yesterday opened the all-professional squad's practice sessions to the amateur team set to see action in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association (Seaba) Champions Cup in Jakarta.

"They can join us any time," said Reyes. "I think we should sit down pretty soon. We don't have to play just tune-up games. If they want, we can practice together."

The offer, though, will only stand for a week as Reyes and his 11-man roster leave for a Carson City basketball camp for a two-week training in the United States. The squad will take the 9 p.m. Philippine Airlines flight on March 29 and are expected to arrive in Los Angeles at 6 p.m.

"Everything is open; even (the services of) our conditioning coach (Dennis Anelle), if they need him," he added.

BAP-Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas president Manny V. Pangilinan similarly broached a possible tune-up session with his own PBA squad Talk 'N Text.

Reyes's wards have been laboring daily with 30-minute offensive and defensive patterns, 45-minute weight sessions and shooting drills at the Moro Lorenzo Sports Center in Ateneo.

The veteran tactician noted that outside shooting has been given emphasis as he expects to encounter the zone defense in the Fiba-Asia Men's Championship in Tokushima, Japan in July.

Before the country's national team plunges to action, though, Harbour Centre-Philippines will break the ice in the country's return to international competitions after a two-year Fiba (international basketball federation) suspension.

Coach Junel Baculi, who will call the shots in the Jakarta club tournament, said that Nwosu will provide the balance for his "offensive-minded team" led by collegiate stars JC Intal, Jason Castro, Jojo Duncil and Marvin Cruz.

"The consensus is to get this guy," said Baculi. "He's wide-bodied and a proven winner in the PBA. We need big guys to complement our shooters and slashers."

"Nwosu will fly in either Friday or Saturday morning, he's coming from LA (Los Angeles)," noted Lawrence Chongson, one of seven PBL mentors tapped to join the coaching staff.

Co-captains Al Magpayo and Chico Lanete, Jeffrey Chan, Larry Rodriguez, Jonathan Fernandez, Erick Rodriguez and Beau Belga complete the 12-man squad set to compete on April 9 to 13.

Doug Kramer, Ryan Araña, Patrick Cabahug and Chad Alonzo were also listed as reserves.

Nwosu, a former NBA backup center and PBA import, has seen action in 14 different countries in Europe, Asia and Middle East. Last year, he also played for the Nigerian national team in the 2006 Fiba World Championship in Japan.

But among the PBL selection, only Castro has international playing experience as a member of the RP Youth Team.

"We'll be playing against veteran teams, so we have to double our efforts," said Castro, the swift 5-foot-9 guard from the Philippine Christian University.

Harbour Centre owner and team financier Mikee Romero said it will be a month of intense training for Harbour Centre-Philippines.

"Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia had years to prepare, while we only have a month," said Romero.

Silverio, Jacobs lead 10 'Hall' inductees

TWO REVERED COACHES WITH CONTRASTing styles along with eight other personalities were elected yesterday to the Philippine Basketball Association's Hall of Fame.

Dante Silverio and Ron Jacobs, both coaching legends in their own right, were the hands-down choices by the seven-member honors committee which selected the second batch of the inductees into the Hall.

Silverio, the well-dressed coach-artist of the now defunct Toyota Corollas, won five PBA championships while Jacobs was acknowledged to have revolutionized coaching in the Philippines. He also engineered the first ever sweep in a best-of-7 title series in the PBA while coaching the national team which played under the Northern Consolidated banner past Manila Beer in the Reinforced Conference Finals in 1985.

Also getting the nod of the committee were Danny Florencio, Abet Guidaben, Norman Black and Manny Paner (players); Domingo Itchon and Eduardo Comjuangco Jr. (league officials) and Tony Siddayao and Pinggoy Pengson (media).

The honors committee is composed of PBA commissioner Noli Eala, former league chairman Ely Capacio, Alaska board representative Joaqui Trillo, former league commissioner Jun Bernardino, Bobong Velez, Emy Arcilla and former Philippine Sports Association president and Malaya sports editor Jimmy Cantor.

Paner played in the league as small center for 12 seasons with four different teams and averaged 12.4 points and 7.0 rebounds in 473 games. He was named to the PBA's first ever Mythical 5 and earned the distinction as "Chairman of the Board" despite his height.

Florencio, was the first local player to score 64 points in 7-Up's 121-136 loss to Toyota in 1977. He averaged 32.3 points in 39 games in 1977. During his eight seasons, Florencio scored 50 points four times, 40 points in six games and 30 points over eight games. He played for Utex, 7-Up, Toyota and Galerie Dominique.

Guidaben was one of only six players to win the MVP award at least twice in 1983 and 1987. He ranks second in the league's all-time list for most total rebounds and most defensive rebounds next only to Ramon Fernandez.

CHAMPION: CKP168.Com copped the Metroball Division F championship. (Standing from left): Elmer Acuna, Angel Maglalang, Red Luna, Ramel Pepito, William Fong, playing team manager Wilt Fong, Ali Suhayli, playing coach Jun Echavez. (Seated from left) Louie Lao, Jerome Tierra, Bong Abac, Jeffrey De Guzman, Boy Echavez (mascot), DJ Perlas and Martin Syjuco.

Marquez must face Pacquiao

From page A25

Earlier, it was announced at the Marquez-Barrera post fight press conference that a rematch has already been tabled for September on the week of the Mexican Independence Day.

"Golden Boy is doing well by trying to have a fight that will attract the people. But you know Pacquiao is also a very attractive fight, and the WBC will support the (Marquez-Barrera) rematch, but first, we have to defend the rules," Sulaiman pointed out.

Sulaiman added that while he saw Marquez the winner over Barrera by "not more than two points," he was not in agreement with the scores of the three judges, who had Marquez the winner by much bigger margins than what had otherwise been a highly competitive bout.

Pacquiao's associate, Rex 'Wakee' Salud, in an exclusive interview yesterday, also confirmed that he received the WBC's letter addressed to Pacquiao, reminding the the Filipino to confirm his interest of being the mandatory challenger to Marquez.

Salud said that the WBC is giving Pacquiao until Friday, March 23, to inform the WBC in writing of his desire to take on Marquez for the WBC title.

Marquez is also expected to decide within the next few days on which belt he plans to retain, as he also holds the WBO featherweight crown. But it is almost certain that he will choose the WBC title as he is apparently more comfortable in the super featherweight (130 lbs) limit.

Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor

Solis ready to shock the world, forge upset vs Filipino ring icon

From page A25

and I will be prepared to deliver the best performance of my career so I can get the biggest win of my career," said Solis, in a press release given out to mediamen by Top Rank.

To prepare for Pacquiao, Solis has been forced to come out of his comfort zone and train in the high mountains of Mexico, which he has not done in the past.

"This fight is very special, very important and we felt we need to get stronger and be in superb condition to win it," added Solis, who is reportedly accompanied in the mountains by his world champion brother Ulisses Solis and his father Aurelio, who both serve as his trainers.

"I never really stop training. I keep in good shape in between fights, but for this fight I have been training with high intensity for four weeks now with the last weeks here in the mountains," said Solis.

Working on his strength and conditioning is a coaching staff that included the highly regarded Raul Robles, who has worked with Erik Morales, Antonio Margarito and Alex "Terra" Garcia.

"I don't expect an easy fight against Pacquiao. He is very strong and fights at a very fast pace. That's why we have been working on my strength and conditioning so much for this fight, we want to be strong for the whole 12 rounds," said Solis.

On Pacquiao's wins over Mexican opponents Solis said: "I know everyone thinks that all Mexicans fight alike, but we don't. We all have different styles and personalities and all of that shows in the way we fight in the ring."

"I know my boxing skills are going to be the key to my victory. I don't expect this to be easy but this is my opportunity to break in the big time. I am very motivated to make a splash and shock the world," said Solis.

Pacquiao, meanwhile, has started training at the Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles, and is expected to reach around peak form by the end of the month.

Pacquiao had started sparring in General Santos City before departing for the US last Saturday. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

Olympic buildup starts next month

By Marc Anthony Reyes

WITH ONLY THE BLESSING OF THE First Gentleman being awaited, some 22 national athletes from four sports disciplines are set to fly to China early next month to start their buildup for the Beijing Olympics.

The China training was earlier agreed by the three-man committee composed of Philippine Sports Commission chair Butch Ramirez, Philippine Olympic Committee secretary general Steve Hontiveros and FG Mike Arroyo.

Ramirez, Hontiveros and a representative of Mr. Arroyo met yesterday to finalize the list of athletes and coaches, who will form the first batch of the Olympic hopefuls who will be deployed to training camps around the world.

However, Hontiveros said they could not give the names of the athletes bound for China as yet. The Beijing-bound athletes will come from wushu, fencing, diving and weightlifting.

The four sports are included in the 14 priority disciplines that were earlier determined by officials and will enjoy funding from the FG Foundation between now and the Beijing Games in August 2008.

Arroyo and Ramirez are also set to meet with Chinese sports officials to establish goodwill as well as identify the training camps where the national athletes will stay.

There are between 50 and 55 athletes included in the priority sports under the FG Foundation's Olympic training program. The estimated budget for their training is P250 million.

The top bets in taekwondo and boxing will be based at home following the request of their respective national sports associations although they have set a series of overseas training and competitions for an 18-month period.

The track and field athletes will train in the United States along with beach volleyball bets who are mostly Fil-Americans.

The swimmers will train in Japan and in the US as several tankers are already based there. Bets in rowing will also go to Japan, the shooters in Germany, the archers in Korea and gymnasts in Russia.

RAMIREZ

POLO FOR A CAUSE: Jake Zobel goes for the ball during the First Panasonic Polo Cup for a Cause at the Alabang Country Club. Bobby Aguirre, Anthony and Adrian Garcia saw action for the Black team which trips the Green of Jun Juban, Tonio Veloso, Anthony Filamor and Sonny Borromeo), 10-6, in the high goal match. Rene Almeda, president of Panasonic Phils., Dr. Greg Alvior, president of the Philippine General Foundation, and Cory Quirino graced the awarding ceremonies. The low goal game was played by lawyer Jun Eusebio, Jay de Jesus, Gusi Aguirre and Ms Fazi (Red) and Edwin Arce, Cole Aguirre, Jimboy Dulay and Jerome Hernandez (Blue). RODEL ROTONI

Foreign bets due for Moto

THE 2007 PUERTO PRINCESA CITY Motocross Masters of Asia FIM-UAM Asian Motocross Championships scored a record high of 13 nations participating in the country's highly awaited biggest motorsports spectacle set to unfold March 24-25 at the Puerto Princesa City motocross racetrack.

India was the latest to confirm with the addition of Karan Gautam in the centerpiece Asian Pro 125 division of this event supported by the City of Puerto Princesa, Aboitiz 2GO, Oakley, the Philippine Sports Commission and Asian regional promoter of event Xtreme Worx Philippines.

Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn said that it's all systems go for the Asian Motocross kickoff. Aside from host Philippines, the other countries that have earlier confirmed were Dubai, Mongolia, Thailand, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Australia, Guam, Japan, United Kingdom, Indonesia and China.

The bulk of the delegations is set to arrive today and they start heading for Puerto Princesa City Thursday.

For details, email namssa@hotmail.com or call 0917-8992363 or visit www.namssa.org.

Valencia trips Quezon in NBC meet

VALENCIA CITY—VALENCIA GOLDEN Harvest thwarted visiting Quezon Villa Anita's spirited rallies in the payoff period to hack out an 82-77 victory Tuesday night in the 2007 NBC National Cup basketball tournament at the packed gym here.

Dennis Concha knocked in 24 points while Rocky Clavel and Nat Cruz added 17 each as Mayor Jose Galario Jr.'s cagers started hot in the community-based tourney.

With Concha and Clavel delivering the goods, Valencia erected a 10-point lead, 61-51, in the last three minutes of the third quarter and then withstood fierce rallies by Quezon Gov. Wilfredo Enverga's cagers to pull the shock win.

Eliazar Berami, the 2005 Rookie of the Year, went scoreless after limping out with a sprained ankle in the third quarter, but another Valencia rookie, Ian Saladaga, came to the rescue by scoring 12 points.

"The Quezon players are all veterans, but we were able to fend them off," said Valencia coach Noli Tagsip.

The scores:

Valencia (82)—Concha 24, Cruz 17, Clavel 17, Saladaga 12, Adams 6, Bollas 4, Cesar 2, Dragon 0, Malcontento 0, Berami 0, Maraon 0

Quezon (77)—Gahol 15, Buenaventura 12, Vilar, Mendoza 8, Malonzo 8, De Guia 8, Veranga 5, Menor 4, Gonzales 2, Agapito 2, Drio 1, Zuniga 0

Quarters: 24-23, 42-40, 61-53, 82-77

Game Today
7 p.m.—Quezon vs Montana

SPORTSWATCH

Mighty Filter Kings gain semis

THE MIGHTY FILTER KINGS NIPPED CROSSROAD, 79-76, TO CLINCH A SEMIS berth in the Amateur Basketball Association (ABA) Championship recently at the Arellano gym in Manila. Sam Gulayan and Randy Chua waxed hot again as the Mighty Filter Kings notched their seventh win in eight games to top the elimination round. The 6-foot-4 Gulayan tallied a game-high 27 points while Chua and Kit Dichaves added 23 and 14 points, respectively. Mike Sy also helped the Mighty Filter Kings scuttle Crossroad's big uprising in the fourth with his clutch baskets. The Mighty Filters Kings are gunning for their second straight championship in the league that lured some of the top teams from the Fil-Chinese community. Just recently, they captured the MBT Division C title.

Pichay Visayas Chess Extravaganza

THE NATIONAL CHESS FEDERATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (NCFP), HEADED BY Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay and Tagaytay Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino, has agreed to hold a three-part chess competition in the Visayas beginning March 25. Dubbed "Pichay Visayas Chess Extravaganza", the tournament will kick off in San Jose, Antique. on March 25-27 with P100,000 at stake. A joint undertaking of Pichay and Gov. Sally Perez, the event is open to all titled and untitled players from all over the country. The champion will bring home a trophy and the lion's share of P20,000, according to Antique sports coordinator Antonio de la Vega. The Pichay Chess Extravaganza will also be held in Iloilo City and Boracay. For inquiries, call/text NM Cesar Caturla at 0928-7132397 or Wilfredo Neri at 0920-5636732.

Las Pinas cockfest fires off today

SMALLTIME COCKERS AND HACKFIGHT ENTHUSIASTS OF METRO MANILA clash at Las Pinas Coliseum when the Fastest Win One-Cock Timbangan fires off at noon today. Hosts Nestor Dandan and Simon Damian said the fastest win champion will be chosen after every ten fights and will receive P17,000. A 14" color TV awaits the overall fastest win champion as bonus. Another Fastest Win event unfolds on Saturday with P100,000 in guaranteed prize at stake. Hosts are Ariel Uy and Kernel group.

SJC Cockers Club features 60 fights

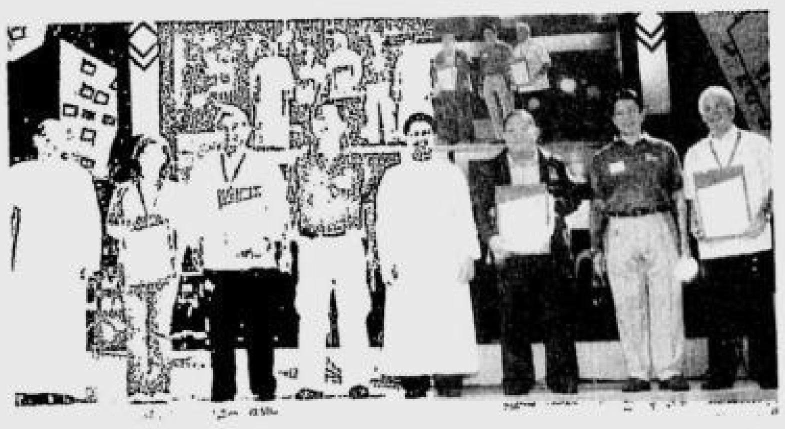
MORE THAN 60 QUALITY FIGHTS WILL SPICE UP THE FIFTH LEG of the SJC Cockers Club 4-cock derby' series today at San Juan Coliseum. Midway into the Cocker of the Year race, a fiery showdown looms among pacesetters Rodolfo Pineda, Butchoy Olano, Bobby Nicolas, Mayor Salvador Perez, Totoy Haruta, Sam Mendoza, Osang dela Cruz, Louie Cua, Boy de Roca, Mario Espinosa and Raymond Velayo. Still in contention are Emil Chua, Bobby Doromal, Tony Manalansan, Enjie Nas, Ed Aparri, Capt. Ducar Dimayuga, Vogs Violago, Vince Cuyugan, Rep. Danny Lagbas, Mario Garcia and Clyde Benabese. For inquiries: 725 -5369 and 725 -6563 or 0917 -8041691 (Maricar).

2 Fil-Germans head Davao triathlon finds

THE SPEEDO-NATIONAL AGE Group Triathlon (NAGT) 2007 Series, which had its inaugural event on Sunday in Davao City, has produced prospective national triathletes in Fil-Germans Anthea and Mathias Kuhnel.

Triathlon Association of the Philippines (Trap) president Tom Carrasco, who graced the event that lured close to 90 participants from as far as Cagayan De Oro, Cebu, Laguna and Mati in Davao Oriental, said Anthea, 19, and Mathias, 16, will be sent to Manila for diagnostic training under former national champion and now Trap assistant coach Ani de Leon.

Carrasco awarded the prizes to the top finishers together with local organizer Vic Sai and Triathlon Association of Davao (Triad) president Maritess del Rosario, Marlon Navarro, assistant. F&B manager of Waterfront Insular Hotel and Gingging Mellomida.



DLSAA HALL OF FAME: De La Salle Alumni Association president Juanito Gervasio inducts new members of the DLSAA Hall of Fame during its alumni homecoming dubbed as GREENerations recently at DLSU-Taft campus. (From left) Bro. Rolando Dizon, FSC (national and local sports), Ma. Concepcio Gana (shooting), Antonio Aldeguer (boxing), DLSAA vice-president for honors and awards, Manuel Blanco, DLSPI president Bro. Armin Luistro, Amadeo Veloso (representing footballer Federico Veloso), Gervasio and Miguel Preysler (golf).

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Miggy Man (5), Prince Paolo (7), Janelle's Episode (1), Bounce Of The Wind (6)
Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—Put Your Foot Down (3), Regal Boom (1), Penny Wise (4), Fujioka (5)
Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Zapp (3), Special Guest (4), Jade Express (2), Kang Kang (5)
Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—On The Fairway (7), Cebuana Spell (1), Classic Appeal (2), Isle Of Fire (6)
Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Fahrenheit/Ocean Cookie (4), Selfmade (3), Dona Nene (3), Virgin Island (6)
Race 6—Serious Susie (7), Lion's Pride (5), Sports Illustrated (5), Itza Lemon (4)
Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Letshaveaparty (4), Iron King (1), Daddy's Girl I(5), Terry Toon (6), Kaori Yoks (13)
Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Jajie (5), Powerdance (4), Kate Alex (9), Brazen Truth (8), Shy Girl (2), Modern Classic (3)

Mail & More, CKP prevail

MAIL & MORE-FEDERAL TYRES BEAT Wang's Ballclub, 69-62, even as CKP 168 nipped UCM Auto Auirocn-Lyceum, 42-41, in the n2007 PICAA Open basketball tournament at the Lyceum gym in Intramuros, Manila. Wynsjohn Te eluded his defenders to score five of his team-high 16 points in the final 45 seconds to power Mail& More to its fifth win in six matches in this eight-team, single-round tournament. Nestor David, Ronjay Buenafe and Jayson Alminario also scored in double figures for Mail& More of coach Johny Tam and assistant coach Eric King. Former FedEx mainstay Bibboy Simon carried the fight for Wang's with 22 points, including five three-point shots. CKP 168 relied on Galen Cacha's two pressure-packed free throws with 13 seconds left to nip UCM-Lyceum and move up to a tie for third to fourth places with a 3-2 win-loss card.

ATENEO Grade school pupil Carlos Encarnacion III (left) and sportsman Jose Leviste Jr. make the ceremonial moves at the start of the Dr. Jose Leviste Sr. Chess Cup on Sunday at the Ateneo Grade School Cafeteria. Also shown are are Ateneo sports director Jun Jun Capistrano and Ateneo chess coach IM Idelfonso Datu.

Araneta Coliseum hosts Bullstag derby

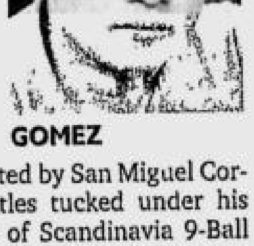
THE NFGB NATIONAL 8-BULLSTAG DERBY SIZZLES AT THE ARANETA COLISEUM beginning at 2 p.m. today with more than 100 fights on tap. Seeing action today are cockers and breeders affiliated with the National Federation of Gamefowl Breeders (NFGB), who scored at least three points in provincial eliminations. Participants with 3.5 and four points will compete on Saturday's championship round. Those who competed at Araneta last Tuesday will also compete on Saturday. An overall tally of 237 entries were registered in this inter-cockpit event offering a guaranteed prize of P3 million, said NFGB president Ricoy Palmares. NFGB, comprised of 24 breeders organizations nationwide, staged the National Bakbakan 9- stag derby last year which attracted 1, 273 entries. For information, call Homer Salgado at 0917-4476707 or Fred Katigbak at 0920-9475204.

Gomez, De Luna BSCP tilt dark horses

THE SPOTLIGHT WON'T BE THEIRS, BUT Jeffrey De Luna and Roberto Gomez are happy with their billing in the 2nd Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines (BSCP) National Championships on March 26 to 31 at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium in Manila. The two rising cue stars are considered the dark horses in the tournament that will determine who really rules the so-called "epicenter" of world billiards.

"That (billing) is all right," said Gomez. "We really know that we're not among the players to beat considering that Efren "Bata" Reyes, Ronnie Alcano and Alex Pagulayan are competing."

DE LUNA



GOMEZ

Gomez, a former news reporter, will enter the tournament, co-organized by BSCP and Raya Sport and presented by San Miguel Corporation, with two titles tucked under his belt—the 2007 Battle of Scandinavia 9-Ball Championship in Norway in January and the Manny Pacquiao 10-Ball Open in General Santos City last month.

"It's better that way because there will be no pressure on us," said De Luna in Filipino.

The 22-year-old De Luna, a former dance instructor, will try to better his third place finish in the tournament's inaugural edition last year.

Also given strong chances of pocketing the P500,000 champion's purse are defending champion Dennis Orcollo and Francisco "Django" Bustamante.

Businessman Perry Mariano, whose Bugsy Promotions is managing Gomez and De Luna, however, believes his wards are capable of springing surprises. "They're in good condition and I believe that they have what it takes to win." said Mariano. *Marlon Bernardino*

Big Baby Davis ready to follow the Big Fella

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA—Glen Davis, the bulky big man better known as "Big Baby" to college basketball rivals, announced here Tuesday he will skip his final season to join the National Basketball Association.

Fifteen years after Shaquille O'Neal announced he was skipping his senior season at Louisiana State University, Davis followed in the footsteps of the Miami Heat superstar who has won four NBA titles.

Davis has career totals of 1,587 points, 916 rebounds and 110 blocks, joining "Shaq" as the only Louisiana State players with such lofty numbers in all three categories.

"This is a move I want to do and am ready to do," Davis said. "This is a dream of mine and one that I have given a great deal of thought. I feel I grew a lot this season and I know in my heart the time is right."

Davis, a wide-bodied center with quick moves, averages 17.7 points and 10.4 rebounds in 29 games this season.

But the Tigers were a disappointing 17-15 this season after reaching the US college semi-finals in 2006, when Davis was the Southeastern Conference Player of the Year with 18.6 points and 9.7 rebounds a game.

"I was fortunate to be on one of LSU's four Final Four teams," Davis said. "One of my reasons for not leaving last year was my hope I could go even further this year. Unfortunately, that didn't happen." *AFP*

DAVIS: I'm ready

Bobcats snap Cavs run

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA—GERALD Wallace had 27 points and 11 rebounds, Adam Morrison hit the go-ahead three-pointer in overtime and the Charlotte Bobcats beat Cleveland 108-100 on Tuesday night to snap the Cavaliers' eight-game winning streak.

Morrison's 3 with 2:15 left snapped a tie and Raymond Felton's driving layup with 48 seconds left made it 101-96. Little-used Walter Herrmann, who scored a career-high 19 points, hit a 3-pointer and two free throws in the final 30 seconds to put it away for Charlotte, which snapped a two-game losing streak.

LeBron James scored 30 of his 37 points after halftime, but he missed a runner in the lane with 10 seconds left in regulation and a 3-pointer at the buzzer to force overtime. James was 12-of-31 from the field.

Matt Carroll scored 20 points, including four free throws late to force overtime, as Charlotte won despite being without four injured regulars.

In other NBA games, it was Denver 94, New Jersey 90; Dallas 92, New York 77; Detroit 96, Philadelphia 75; New Orleans 114, Memphis 103; LA Clippers 103, Chicago 89; Utah 104, Golden State 100; Houston 86, Indiana 76; Phoenix 108, Minnesota 90; Portland 100, Washington 98.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Carmelo Anthony scored 12 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter and the Nuggets won their fifth straight game. Allen Iverson added 20 points and a clinching free throw in the final seconds in helping the Nuggets win for the first time in New Jersey since 2000. It also marked the first time this season that Denver has won a game (1-21) when scoring less than 99 points.

Vince Carter had 29 points and nine assists for the Nets, but he was called for walking with 45 seconds to play, and missed a potential tying 3-pointer with 12 seconds to go. Richard Jefferson had 18 points for the Nets, who had won nine of 10 against Denver.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Tayshaun Prince scored 30 points as Philadelphia, playing two days after the worst home loss in franchise history, was routed on the road. The Pistons ended a three-game losing streak at home.

The game was the first between the teams since Chris Webber signed with the Pistons after being waived by Philadelphia in January. Webber finished with nine points and seven rebounds in 27 minutes as Detroit improved to 22-7 since he moved into the starting lineup.

Richard Hamilton added 18 points for the Pistons, including a perfect 8-for-8 from the stripe.

Willie Green led Philly with 20 points, while Andre Miller added 16.

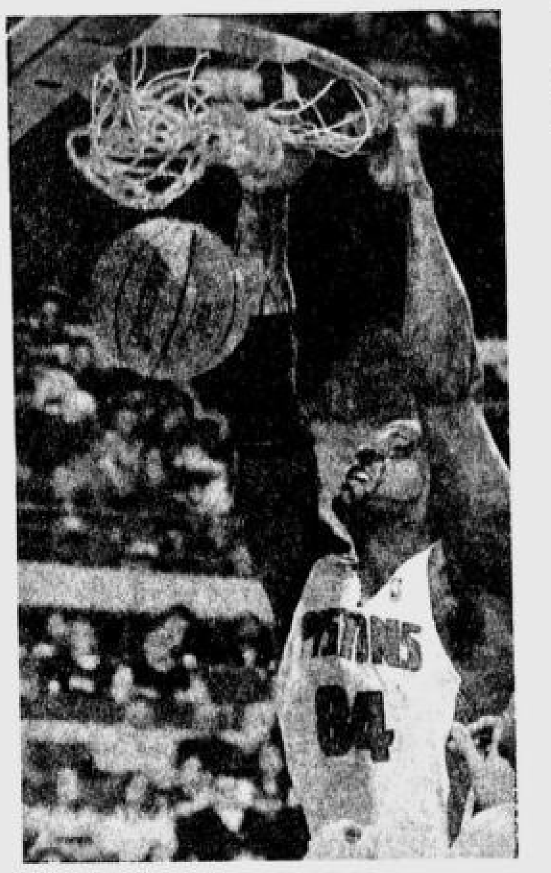
In New York, Dirk Nowitzki and Josh Howard each scored 24 points, and the Mavericks hit the 55-win mark for the third straight season. Jason Terry added 15 points for the Mavericks, who pulled away from the short-handed Knicks early in the second half and improved the NBA's best record to 55-11. They have won three in a row after losing consecutive games for first time since starting 0-4.

Erick Dampier had 10 points and 13 rebounds, and Howard grabbed 10 boards as the deeper Mavs wore down the Knicks and shot 53 percent from the field.

Eddy Curry had 22 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks, who are playing without the injured Jamal Crawford, David Lee and Quentin Richardson, and have lost three of four.

In addition, Stephon Marbury left with about 5½ minutes remaining with what looked like an injury to his left arm; Channing Frye missed most of the second half after getting poked in the right eye; and Curry played through a back problem that forced him to miss the morning shootaround.

In Memphis, Tennessee, David West scored 26 points and Chris Paul added 23 points and nine assists for New Orleans. West connected on 10 of 15 shots from the floor, leading six Hornets in double figures. *AP*



WEBBER: Return to Philadelphia AFP

Small town girl weaves big tennis dreams

By Cedelf Tupas, *Inquirer Visayas*

BACOLOD CITY—TENNIS ISN'T EXACTLY A contact sport.

But Jonica Martina Guba literally had a bloody debut.

It happened seven years ago when Guba, a six-year-old playing in a 10-Under unisex tournament, was so eager to change ends that she failed to see the three-foot-six-inch high wire bridging the net and the pole. She slammed her nose into the wire, prompting blood to ooze freely from her nostrils.

Any ordinary tennis player, especially a six-year-old girl already faced with tough odds against a boy two years older than her, would have opted for retirement from the match.

Except that when it comes to her passion for tennis, Jonica Martina is far from ordinary. And not just because she was named after three greats of the sport—American Johan Creek, Frenchman Yannick Noah and Swiss Miss Martina Hingis.

Guba, with her all enthusiasm and passion for the sport, shrugged off the injury but lost a one-sided encounter with a boy two years older than her.

"I just wanted to keep on playing," Guba, who was born 14 years ago in the sugar-producing city of La Carlota in Negros Occidental, told the INQUIRER. "I didn't want to retire in my first actual match."

Guba first held a tennis racket at the age of two, egged on by dad Socrates, a former varsity standout from Cebu.

Months later, she was walling the ball at a decrepit pelota court at the Central Azucarera de La Carlota, a stone's throw away from their home.

"I wanted her to feel the racket early," said Socrates, whose two sons, Yannick and Johan, have also made their mark in the age-group scene.

The early training paid off slowly but surely, a process that continues up until now.

Two years after her bloody experience, Martina emerged as Western Visayas' top girls' 12-Under player, underscoring that tag by working her way to a bronze medal finish in the 2002 Palarong Pambansa in Naga City.

Martina earned raves for her feat and Socrates took her to the next level, fielding her in major age-group events in Manila.

But after successful Big City stints in 2002 and 2003, she had to settle for local tournaments for two years because her mother, Nimfa, who accompanies her in all out-of-town events, had to undergo surgery to correct her spinal column.

"I was looking forward to more tournaments but I knew my mother's condition was far important than tennis," Martina said.

When she returned to the summer circuit, an unranked Martina—armed with more solid groundstrokes—made heads turn, winning the national 14-Under crown in 2005 as a 12-year-old. She also won the Palarong Pambansa crown that year at the expense of Regina Santiago.

In her first international campaign in Malaysia, Guba ruled the Selangor Age-Group Tournament in December but flu slowed her down in Perlis and Langkawi events, where she surrendered the singles crowns to compatriot Sally Mae Siso. She teamed up with Siso for three doubles titles.

Martina, though, wasn't satisfied.

"I wanted to match Yannick's record," she said, referring to her older brother's record of six crowns in the same circuit.

But Socrates believes Martina can go further: "She has stronger groundstrokes for her age. We just need to work on her speed, footwork and serve."

Martina overcame tough qualifying tournaments in Manila last month to clinch a berth in the 14-Under and 16-Under events of the World Juniors Championship Asia Oceana in India from April 21-28 and the Junior Federation Cup from May 8-13 in Malaysia.

"We hope that these tournaments open up more opportunities for her especially in the India tournament where the top two finishers will be given a chance to play in European tournaments," Socrates said.

Martina also knows the tournament could be the start of something bigger for her, a step that could bring closer to a lifelong dream of playing against the future Hall-of-Famer she was named after.

"I hope to play in Wimbledon, perhaps against Martina Hingis," Martina added.

AFTER getting off on a "bloody" debut, Jonica Matina Guba hopes to destroy all obstacles standing between her and her ultimate tennis goal.

Sharapova finds path blocked by Williamses

KEY BISCAYNE, FLORIDA—TOP-SEEDED Maria Sharapova might have to go through the Williams sisters, both three-time champions, just to reach the quarterfinals of the Sony Ericsson Open starting on Wednesday.

Sharapova, the runner-up for the last two years to Svetlana Kuznetsova in 2006 and Kim Clijsters in 2005, has a bye into the second round, where she'll face either Chan Yung-jan of Taiwan or Nuria Llagostera Vives of Spain.

In the third round the Russian could meet Venus Williams, the champion in 1998, 1999 and 2001 but unseeded this year. Williams, who opens against Yuliana Fedak of Ukraine, has played only one tournament this year, winning last month in Memphis for her 34th career title.

Sharapova and Williams last met in the 2005 Wimbledon final, which Venus won for her fifth major title.

The winner of a possible Sharapova-Williams clash could meet 13th-seeded Serena Williams in the fourth round.

Sharapova lost to Serena in the Australian Open final, Serena's eighth Grand Slam crown and last appearance on the tour.

Serena leads Venus 8-7 in matchups. They haven't met since the 2005 U.S. Open fourth round. However, Venus leads Serena 2-1 at Key Biscayne, including the 1999 final. Serena, who won three straight finals here from 2002-2004, meets Elena Likhovtseva of Russia or a qualifier in her opener.

Eighteen of the top 20 women are entered, with only No. 3 Amelie Mauresmo and No. 10 Elena Dementieva missing.

"This year it is an extremely tough draw, especially with the Williams sisters here," Kuznetsova said.

The men's field includes 19 of the top 20, minus only No. 13 Mario Ancic.

Two-time defending champion Roger Federer, his 41-match winning streak ended in his opening match at last week's Pacific Life Open, had a bye into the second round, where he awaits Igor Andreev of Russia or wild card Sam Querrey.

Federer was seeded to meet either Tommy Haas or Tommy Robredo in the quarterfinals, with a possible showdown against Ivan Ljubicic in the semifinals for a repeat of last year's final. *AP*

Woods, Federer play in Miami—but not against each other

MIAMI—TIGER WOODS AND ROGER Federer go about their business in different ways.

Federer carries his own bag but has someone pick up his balls. Woods has someone carry his bag but picks up his own balls.

Unlike Federer, Woods rarely comes up with an ace, has no backhand and tries to be sub-par.

Federer's driver only drops him off at tournaments; Woods' driver helps him win tournaments. And Federer often hits more shots in a single round than Woods needs in a week.

Such disparities make comparing the two champions difficult. But lively debate is likely this week, when both will play in Miami.

Tiger and Roger are the best at what they do. But who's better?

"I'd whup him," Woods says.

In tennis?

"Oh, in tennis! No."

Woods will stick to golf this week in the CA Championship, which begins Thursday at Doral. Fifteen miles (25 kms) to the southeast on Key Biscayne, Federer plays his opening match Saturday night in the Sony Ericsson Open. Each player seeks to win in Miami for the third year in a row.

Both events will draw big crowds. Woods hopes to be among the spectators watching Federer.

"I would love to try and catch one of his matches, if not two," Woods says.

Federer may skip Doral. He was in the gallery when Woods played tournaments in Shanghai in November and Dubai last month, and found walking with golf's most popular player a challenge.

"I went to watch Tiger, and it's not the easiest thing," Federer says. "Luckily I walked inside the ropes, but to go see him playing golf is tough. You never really see him. You only see the backs of other people. I guess tennis is more fan friendly in that respect.

"I don't know if I'm going to go see him here, but I hope he's going to come to the tennis on the weekend."

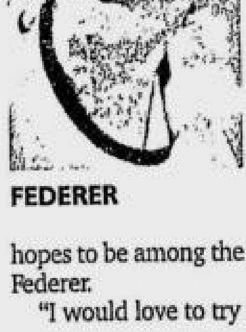
The two became friends the past year. Woods and his wife, Elin, sat in the front row at the US Open as Federer's guests when he won the final last September.

"We could relate very much to one another," Federer says. "We have a lot of expectations from everybody, so we have a lot of common ground."

They stayed in touch over the holidays, and again while Federer played in the Australian Open early this year. When he won the tournament for his 10th Grand Slam title, he received a teasing text message from Woods: "12 to 10."

Woods, 31, has won 12 Grand Slam titles, six shy of Jack Nicklaus' record. Federer, 25, needs four more major titles to match Pete Sampras' record of 14. *AP*

WOODS



FEDERER

Laurente risks Paba title vs Indon at ESC

PAN-ASIAN BOXING ASSOCIATION (PABA) lightweight champion Dennis Laurente will defend his title tomorrow against interim champion Hero Katili of Indonesia in a 12-round battle at the Elorde Sports Center in Parañaque City.

The match-up is one of the two championship showdowns being arranged as the culminating activity of the Elorde Boxing Week organized by the family of the late Gabriel 'Flash' Elorde, which will be highlighted by the annual Elorde Sports Awards.

Laurente had won the PABA title with a split decision victory over Thailand's Somchai Nakbalee last Oct. 31 right at the latter's hometown. Prior to that bout, Laurente had prevailed via unanimous decision over Rustam Nugaev at the Manny Pacquiao-Oscar Larios event at the Araneta Coliseum.

The other championship showdown pits Philippine featherweight titlist Vinvin Rufino of the Johnny Elorde Stable against Victor Man-on in another 12-round offering.

An exciting undercard will feature Juan Martin 'Bai' Elorde, grandson of the late Flash Elorde, in a special attraction for his second professional bout against Leo Albao.

The young Elorde had an impressive pro debut on Feb. 24 right in his grandfather's hometown in Cebu, easily outpointing Joseph Mateo over four rounds at the 'Moment of Truth' card.

The rest of the card pits Pederito Laurente versus Joebar Damosmog (8 rds); Rexon Flores against Arcadio Simbajon (8 rds); Rey Ramos versus Jeno Quilitar (6 rds); Jayson Rotoni versus Climer Mendoza (6 rds); and Arvin Escanilla against Jonard Abonales (4 rds).

Salven Lagumbay

NESTEA
NESTEA

BANGLADESH Pantaleon of Letran College dives for the ball during the Luzon eliminations of the Nestea Beach Volleyball. RODEL ROTONI

FEU tandem sweeps beach volley rivals

By June Navarro

WITH THE DEFENDING CHAMPIONS from St. Benilde now gone, Wendy Anne Semana and Lorelin Astorga loomed as the tandem to watch in the Luzon eliminations of the 2007 Nestea Beach Volleyball.

The duo from Far Eastern University swept past their counterparts from Lyceum and University of Baguio yesterday at the La Salle Greenhills sand court.

Enduring the intense heat, Semana and Astorga toppled Lyceum's Sherrilyn Carrillo and Jane Kathleen Jarin of Lyceum, 21-17, 21-19, before posting a 21-18, 21-13 triumph over Baguio's Madonna Rimando and Leila Joy Parra.

"We encountered little problems as far as adjustment is concerned," said the 19-year-old Astorga of his partnership with Semana.

Both are teammates in the FEU squad that finished second to UST in the just concluded UAAP women's volleyball championships.

"What we're really concerned of is Adamson, which defeated us in a tournament prior to this one," Astorga, a BS sports recreation management senior, said in Tagalog.

The Adamson pair of Hannah Suarez and Rissa Jane Laguilles emerged contenders in the pre-tournament draw after last year's titlists Faith De Guzman and Jannalyn Surabia from the College of St. Benilde used up their eligibility.

In the men's division, defending champion Adamson hinted of things to come as Mike Alinsunurin and Sherwin Meneses whipped Ronnie Borlagdatan and Almahdie Hamid, 21-13, 21-11.

Letran also made its presence felt after Eden Canlas and Richard Hiyao walloped UP's Bon Andrew Perez and Mark Anthony Corpuz, 21-13, 21-8.

In contrast, San Sebastian's Carlo Clave and Raffy Mosuela labored for three sets before carving out a 21-16, 21-18 and 15-8 decision over University of Luzon's Jerson De Guzman and Benigno Gil.

Sarah Gonzaga and Acelyn Dubiao of St. Francis of Assisi College clobbered St. Louis University's Sarah Marie Macatulad and Stephanie Dayot, 21-7, 21-12, in the opener of the women's division.

But the St. Francis duo faltered against Letran's Bangladesh Pantaleon and Joy Gazelle Cases, 16-21, 21-18, 8-15, leaving the volleybelles from FEU as the only unbeaten tandem in the 10-team qualifying stage.

Relying on rookies LC Girly Quemada and Wena Riza Miran, defending champion College of St. Benilde succumbed to Cathlea Villaluz and Arlene Bernardo of Philippine Christian University, 21-12, 21-13.

The top three teams from the men's and women's divisions after tomorrow's finale will represent Luzon in the national championships scheduled on April 19-21 in Boracay.

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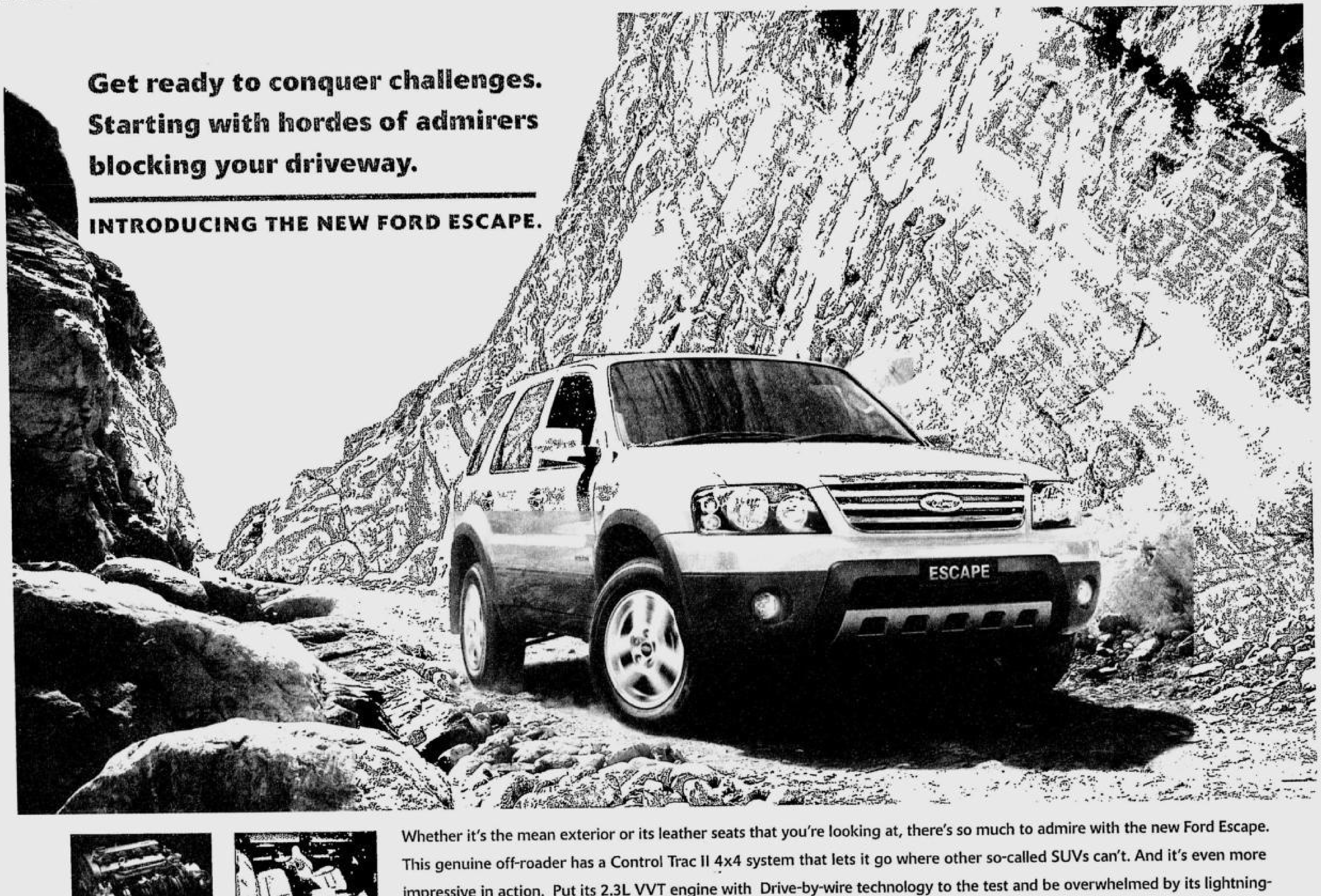

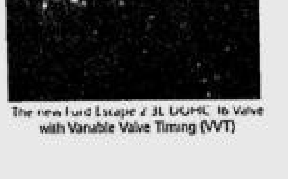
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Pagcor's Las Vegas dream to cost $20B

State firm in talks with Greek, US gaming operators

By Daxim L. Lucas and Riza Olchondra

THE PHILIPPINE AMUSEMENT AND GAMING Corp. (Pagcor) has raised its project cost estimate for its ambitious gaming complex—to be patterned after Las Vegas—that will rise on a reclaimed portion of Manila Bay USA.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, Pagcor chair and CEO Ephraim Genuino said that as much as $20 billion—equivalent to 16 percent of the country's total economic output in 2006—would be spent in putting up the "Entertainment City."

This marks a 33-percent hike over the initial $15-billion cost that was announced when the project was unveiled in 2001. Under the original plan, the investments and project cost would be spread out over a 10-year period.

"The project is a shift [for Pagcor] from gaming into entertainment," Genuino told reporters at the Asian Gaming and Entertainment Plus Leisure Expo Manila. "We will form a Las Vegas in the Philippines."

The complex, also called Pagcor City, will be built in three phases on 800 hectares of reclaimed land. The first phase will host a hotel-resort and theme park. The next two phases will have retirement villages and entertainment centers.

PAGCOR'S/ B2

INDICATORS

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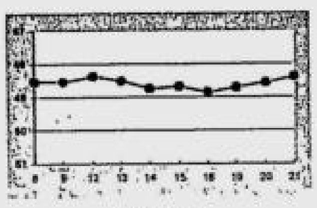


MARCH

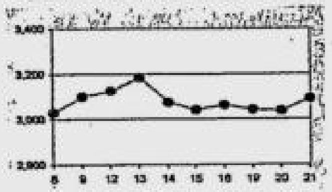
PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P48.41 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 21, 2007

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B6)

Shares close 1.68% higher on bargain hunting

SHARES YESTERDAY CLOSED 1.68 percent higher as investors snapped up bargains, following a two-day decline, dealers said.

However, the thin turnover suggests many investors opted to stay on the sidelines until the US Federal Reserve concludes its two-day policy meeting later in the day, they said.

The composite index was up 51.09 points at the day's high of 3,090.47, off a low of 3,039.38. The broader all-share index rose 26.39 points at 1,997.53.

Gainers beat losers 90 to 23, with 50 stocks unchanged.

SHARES/ B2

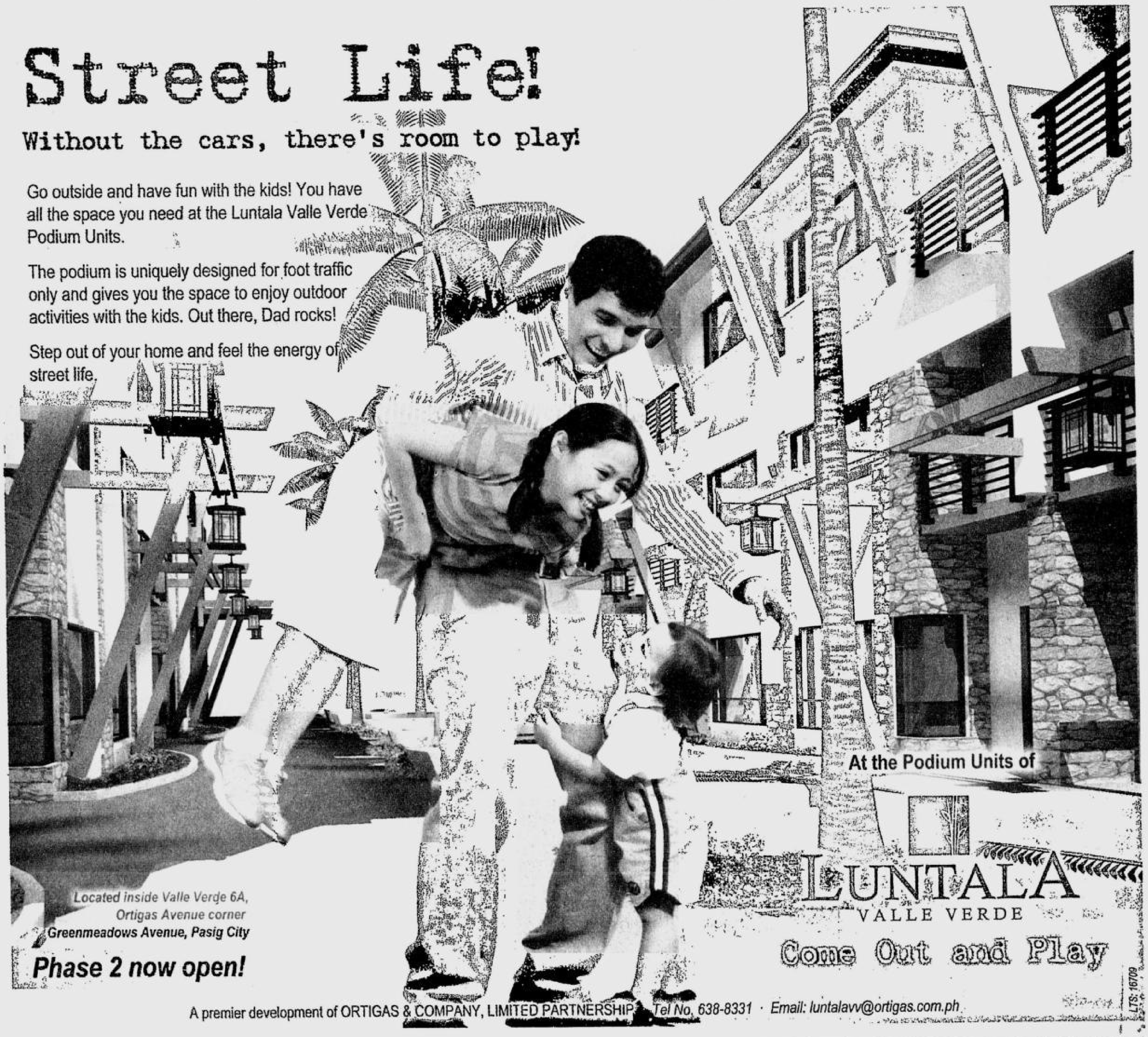
INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Daily minimum wages (Non-agriculture, in pesos)

①	NCR	P350
②	CALABARZON	P287
③	CEBU	P241
④	DAVAO	P240
⑤	BAGUIO	P235
⑥	GEN SAN	P224.5

Source: National Wages and Productivity Commission
Kate Pedroso Inquirer Research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The latest Buzz in Business : The "BOSS" partners with the "BIZ"

And the whiner is…

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

SOME BANK CUSTOMERS ARE just plain whiners, period.

Take this incident that happened yesterday at the HSBC Savings Bank branch at the Royal Plaza on Remedios Street in Malate, Manila.

A group of Taiwanese businessmen wanted to cash ("encash" in proper English in Britain) two checks for P300,000 and P400,000 at the HSBC branch.

The group has a little mining business in Mindanao, and yesterday, they bothered HSBC Savings for cash, because they had to pay the wages of the workers at the mine site.

Earlier, before coming to Manila they opened an account with HSBC in Hong Kong and sent the money to HSBC here through telegraphic transfer.

But what more did the customers want from the bank? HSBC Savings said, okay, it was their money, and they had all the right to withdraw it.

But in so many abrasive words that the customers only deserved, HSBC Savings simply informed them that the bank could not service their withdrawal.

Again, they were just customers. They do not even own the bank, okay!

HSBC Savings already recognized that the checks were properly endorsed and funded. The bank even asked for and got proper identification from the withdrawing party.

But didn't the customers know they have to notify the bank at least two days in advance? Even for a measly P700,000? Well, according to the bank, even for less!

The last time I checked, the Bangko Sentral has no such stupid at-least-two-day-notice rule because, in banking, a funded check is always as good as cash.

That's why, here, we admire a foreign bank like HSBC that can make its own rules, as it was said to have done in the past to corner the T-bill and T-note business.

Anyway, the Taiwanese customers chose the Malate branch of HSBC Savings, only because they were staying at a hotel on Roxas Boulevard.

The HSBS Savings branch told them to go to the Greenhills (San Juan) branch instead, and that was it, period, no ifs or buts.

Of course, as desirable foreigners in this country that tries to woo investors, the Taiwanese businessmen would not know Greenhills from Victoria Court!

They thus missed their flight to Mindanao yesterday. The workers in the mine, not to mention their families, would probably not eat and just go hungry today.

Still, our contacts at Standard Chartered Bank assured us that such was not the British way of banking.

* * *

ONE of those many award rites in business took place the other night. It was none other than the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year, Philippines 2007, the aim of which is "to identify, acknowledge, and encourage those entrepreneurial business people who, through their energy and passion, help bolster our economy, underpin our future and create wealth and employment for so many people."

When did profit stop being the motivation for business?

Anyway, and the winner is, well, none other than former Agriculture Secretary Senen Bacani, now chair and president of La Frutera, a banana plantation and exporting company in the ARMM.

Yes, that's the conflict-ridden Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, where La Frutera hired former Muslim rebels (a few hundreds). Muslims now comprise almost 90 percent of its workforce, including management positions.

I mean, isn't this Bacani something else? Sure, he probably deserves the award. But I think we must declare him a hero.

The winners in the past were Tony Tan Caktiong (Jollibee), Socorro Cancio-Ramos (National Bookstore) and Lance Gokongwei (Cebu Air, owner of Cebu-Pacific).

The three are all in the service sector, while Bacani is into corporate farming.

So far, for the sake of Richard Gomez and Cesar Montano, the award has yet to recognize anybody in manufacturing in its four years here.

Does it mean that our country has no good manufacturing entrepreneurs? Or is manufacturing already dead?

* * *

WHY did Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, the campaign manager of the Genuine Opposition, have to call off the coalition's campaign sorties?

"To assess things," the GO said.

Word now is going around that the politically astute man named Band… Wrist Band, is not in the mood to spend for the campaign.

My info is, the GO candidates are raising campaign funds on their own. Watch out, you guys in business!

On the other side, the Team Unity of this cute administration is talking of support from local government units, with Ilocos Region, La Union, Leyte, Tarlac, Bohol, Cebu, Antique and Iloilo promising a 12-0 shutout (in favor of the administration).

Really? Let's see.

* * *

ALSONS Corp. (the Mindanao-based unit of the Alcantara group) sold its interest in the copper-gold mine in Tampaka (South Cotabato) to the Australian firm Indophil Resources.

Alsons had a 5-percent interest in the mining firm, while Indophil had the remaining 95 percent.

Indophil would pay for the Alsons interest in cash, worth about P165 million, and undertake a share-swap arrangement. Alsons was to get 37 million new shares in Indophil, making Alsons the second largest stockholder in the publicly listed Indophil.

In turn, Indophil was to partner with the Swiss firm Xtrata (fourth largest copper mining firm in the world), which gets 65 percent interest in the Tampaka project.

The Tampaka is said to have one of the world's largest copper and gold deposits yet undeveloped.

* * *

ACTUALLY, according to this top executive of one of the country's largest manufacturing conglomerate, who also flies small aircraft, the Ninoy Aquino International Airport has two runways.

Only, the Naia is forced to use only one.

It seems that a tall building happened to have erected itself near the flight path of the other (now useless) runway.

Only in this country…

I promise to have more on this in the near future. It's just that, at the moment, nobody in Naia would take my call.

Shares close 1.68% …

From page B1

Turnover was 8.3 billion shares worth P2.4 billion ($50.8 million).

The peso traded at 48.44 to the dollar.

"After the previous week's slump and the fall early this week, investors saw some positions for bargain-hunting, so it's a mixed bag of blue chips and penny stocks," said Lawrence de Leon of Accord Capital Equities Inc.

He said investors were still cautious but were more convinced that the market is starting to stabilize after weeks of volatile trading.

"There will still be some holding back; a lot depends on the performance of the regional markets," De Leon said.

Top-traded Philippine Long Distance Telephone tracked overnight gains in its New York-listed shares, rising P95 to P2,390.

Rival Globe Telecom advanced P5 to P1,300.

Property developer Megaworld Corp. rose 10 centavos to P3.

Power distributor Manila Electric Co.'s A-shares, exclusive to Filipino investors, gained one peso to P69 while its B-shares, open to foreigners, rose P1.50 to P70.

Food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.'s A-shares were steady at P63.50, while its B-shares inched up 50 centavos to P72.50.

AFP

Pagcor's Las Vegas dream to cost $20B

From page B1

Separately, however, Pagcor officials said that only "$10 billion to $15 billion" would be spent on the first phase of the project, which would cover between 45 to 65 hectares of the total proposed area.

Genuino said that only 25 percent of the total land area has so far been reclaimed, with the rest to be added as the project gets underway.

Genuino also expressed confidence that the Pagcor City project will not encounter opposition, even from the Catholic Church.

"For us to hurdle opposition to gaming, we will follow Las Vegas," he said. "I think the Church will understand. We are the biggest income generator for the government, and I think the Church will be mature enough to understand."

The gaming firm said that it made P25 billion in revenue from casino operations in 2006, almost 10 percent higher than the P23 billion profit it posted in 2005.

The head of the state gaming monopoly revealed that they are already in talks with Greek casino and resort operator Loutraki—a major player in the European gaming industry—for the development of Entertainment City's first phase.

"We have also spoken with Ceasar's Palace and Genting," he said, referring to the US- and Malaysia-based casino operators.

Genuino said 90 percent of the funds for the project will come from foreign investors. Other funders from Japan, Europe, the US and South Korea have also signified interest in financing the project.

Japanese investors, he said, are interested in developing a retirement village within the area for the expanding Japanese retiree market.

He added that Pagcor is now working on the technical requirements of the project, with preparatory work scheduled to begin this year. Construction would be completed by 2009.

"The thrust now is not casino gaming but total entertainment," Genuino said. "In the global arena, only 25 percent of the revenues of gaming destinations such as Las Vegas come from actual gambling."

He said the Philippines stands to gain substantial tourism revenues by taking an active role in the global gaming industry. He noted that even a conservative country such as Singapore has opened its door to casinos as it realizes the benefits to be derived from the industry.

"With Pagcor City, we will quadruple our tourists to 10 million in five years," he said. "We hope we can catch up with Singapore and Macau."

Genuino also said foreign investments in the project will be finalized once Pagcor's charter is amended to allow the state-owned company to enter into joint ventures with foreign investors.

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Monte Oro losing interest in Transco

A FILIPINO-CHINESE INvestor group yesterday said it was unlikely to bid for the right to operate the Philippines' multi-billion dollar power grid when a fifth attempt is made to auction the network.

Walter Brown, chair of Philex Corp.—which set up Monte Oro Grid Resources Corp. with State Grid Corp. of China for the power grid auction—said the group was considering other investment options at the moment.

"There is a 95 percent possibility we will not bid. But we are still evaluating," Brown said on the sidelines of a mining conference.

The government failed for the fourth time in February to sell a 25-year license to run the assets of National Transmission Corp., which was valued at P138 billion.

Only one bidder—a consortium of Philippine investment firm Citadel Holdings Inc. and Italian power grid operator Terna SPA—turned up for last month's auction.

A third investment group, Triratna Holdings Corp., composed of top Philippine business leaders, did not submit a bid. It said it would make an offer if some documentary issues, which it did not specify, were resolved.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said fresh bidding for the power grid would be held only after Congress agrees to give the potential winner a franchise to operate the asset.

The winning bidder would need to spend $850 million to expand and upgrade the power grid over the next five years.

Manila has been trying to sell off the assets of Transco and National Power Corp as part of a broader fiscal consolidation programme and to modernize the country's decrepit power sector. *Reuters*

IMF calls for new tax measures

P63-B budget deficit ceiling for '07 raised concern

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND sees the need for the Philippines to adopt new revenue raising measures—such as the fiscal incentives rationalization and further reforms in the excise tax structure for alcohol and cigarettes—to meet its goal of balancing the national budget by next year.

The latest country review of the IMF noted that while improvements in tax administration in the Philippines could partially help the government shore up its tax effort by about 2.5 percent of gross domestic product over the medium term, new tax measures were needed to wipe out the budget deficit.

It also raised concern over the viability of the government's budget deficit ceiling of P63 billion for this year given the need for higher infrastructure spending after years of belt-tightening.

"The IMF staff proposed the reduction of tax incentives, and the increase and indexing of excise taxes to inflation as potential revenue raisers," the report said.

In this regard, the IMF staff said an early announcement of tax measures for the 2008 budget would help "convey the authorities' commitment to continued fiscal consolidation."

But local authorities, for their part, believe that congressional support for new tax measures is contingent on fully collecting revenues from the recent value added tax reform, which raised the consumption tax rate to 12 percent from 10 percent and scrapped certain exemptions.

Excise taxes on "sin" products were reformed a few years ago but the final version was widely considered by analysts and economists (including those from the IMF) as "watered down" as it did not properly index the tax rates to inflation as originally envisioned by the Department of Finance.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves wants to wait for the first-semester collection results of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs before considering new tax measures.

The IMF said meeting the government budget's twin objectives of further consolidating and giving higher priority to spending this year would require national government revenues to grow by 15 percent, higher than the projected 10 percent growth in nominal (not adjusted to inflation) gross domestic product, the IMF said.

It said that meeting this revenue goal would be challenging, particularly given the difficulty of passing new tax measures before the May 2007 elections. It raised concern that cutting expenditure to meet the deficit target, on the other hand, could undermine the goal of raising infrastructure and social spending.

The report said a "slightly less ambitious deficit target might be appropriate for 2007 providing that the overall downward direction in the deficit could be maintained."

Finance officials, however, are worried that any relaxation in the deficit target might be misinterpreted as an attempt to increase spending ahead of the elections. Also, they said that setting ambitious revenue targets would help provide incentives to boost collection efficiency.

Progress in other areas is expected to be boosted by the recent approval of the World Bank tax administration loan ($11 million). This will provide a framework for financial and technical support from other donors.

The staff urged the BIR to accelerate the pace of work on cleaning the taxpayer register, auditing tax arrears and drafting industry-based audit manuals.

Gov't team holding roadshow in US, Europe

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC TEAM WILL embark on a "no-deal" international roadshow in key cities in the United States and Europe this April to herald recent fiscal progress and affirm commitment to sustain economic reforms.

Renato Pizarro, the government's executive director for investor relations, said the series of meetings with foreign investors would be held on April 16 to 20, or right after the International Monetary Fund-World Bank spring meeting in Washington DC.

In the US, the roadshow will be held in two cities, New York and Boston, which will be arranged by American financial giants Citigroup and JP Morgan.

The European leg will be in London and Frankfurt, with DeutscheBank and Credit Suisse First Boston as arrangers.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. will lead the economic team.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said the government had no intention to float any new global bonds after the roadshow, having completed its $1-billion foreign commercial borrowing requirement early in the year.

"It's a no-deal roadshow," Cruz said.

For the first time in many years, "soft" foreign loans from official development partners will be bigger than commercial loan inflow, based on the borrowing program.

The economic managers will use the roadshow as a platform to affirm commitment to fiscal consolidation, after the government slashed its budget deficit from P146.5 billion in 2005 to an eight-year low of P62.2 billion in 2006.

Despite concerns of fiscal slippage during the run-up to the mid-term elections in May, the national government was able to keep its budget deficit below target in the first two months of the year.

The government posted a cash budget surplus of P11.1 billion in February due to large privatization proceeds and controlled spending.

The January to February cumulative deficit was P21.8 billion lower than the P40.4 billion shortfall in the same period last year. It represented only 40 percent of the first-quarter deficit ceiling of P45.8 billion.

The Department of Finance said the government was on track to meeting its full-year deficit target of P63 billion.

Phillip Wyatt, an economist at UBS, said the government's target to hit a surplus in the second quarter would be boosted by two factors: the tax season (April) and the ban on infrastructure spending ahead of the election which should keep expenses low.

"All told, the first half (fiscal) targets are looking realistic and slippage should be minimal," Wyatt said.

"For the second half, the risks include some catching up in spending and the impact on tax revenue of the expected slowdown in exports. Butwe remain confident that any second half slippage will not be serious and, at worst, the budget deficit will be 1-2 percent (of gross domestic product) in 2007," Wyatt said. *Doris C. Dumlao*

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE HAMILO COAST PROJECT TO BE LAUNCHED BY SM INVESTMENT CORPORATION ON MARCH 22, 2007

SM INVESTMENT CORPORATION IS SCHEDULED TO MAKE A PUBLIC LAUNCHING OF ITS **HAMILO COAST PROJECT** LOCATED AT **HACIENDA LOOC, NASUGBU, BATANGAS** ON MARCH 22, 2007

THE PUBLIC IS HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT OUT OF THE 5,800 HECTARES COVERING THE HAMILO COAST PROJECT **2,700 HECTARES ARE COVERED BY ADVERSE CLAIMS ANNOTATED BY CARMONA REALTY & DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION.** THE PROPERTIES COVERED BY ADVERSE CLAIMS ARE **TCT NOS. 73003, 73007, 73652, 73653, 85605, 85606, 85607, 85610, 85611, 85612 AND 80981** ISSUED BY THE REGISTRY OF DEEDS OF BATANGAS.

THE PUBLIC AND PROSPECTIVE INVESTORS ARE, THEREFORE, ADVISED TO TAKE THE PROPER STEPS TO ASCERTAIN AND VERIFY THAT THE PROPERTIES IN THE HAMILO COAST PROJECT THAT THEY WILL BE PURCHASING FROM SM INVESTMENT CORPORATION OR ANY OF ITS AFFILIATES, PARTNERS AND AGENTS ARE NOT PART OF THE 2,700 HECTARES WHICH ARE COVERED BY SAID ADVERSE CLAIMS.

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Nido Petroleum sets oil, gas exploration plan

Citigroup retail unit puts up branch in Davao City

By Doris C. Dumlao

CITIBANK Savings officials (from left) Noemi Azura, director for retail banking; Jeffrey Choa, president, and director Michellina Triwardhany led the inauguration of the bank's branch in Davao yesterday.

DAVAO CITY—THE RETAIL BANKing unit of the world's largest financial conglomerate, Citigroup, yesterday firmed up its foothold in Mindanao by opening here its second branch in southern Philippines.

Citibank Savings is investing about P2 billion to finish the conversion, infrastructure-building and re-branding of all 36 branches that Citibank NA acquired in 2005 from local insurance group Insular. The newest branch on JP Rizal Street in Davao City is the 26th of the spruced-up branch network.

Bank president Jeffrey Choa, said: "Our customers are growing, our portfolio is growing, our products are expanding and we're happy to receive a warm welcome every time we inaugurate a new branch."

Within the year, he said, the bank would re-brand and integrate the rest of the 10 branches into Citibank Savings.

Choa told reporters at the branch inauguration yesterday that since taking over Insular Savings Bank in March 2005 and converting the branches into Citibank Savings, deposits generated by the thrift bank had surged to P7 billion from only P3 billion.

Noemi Azura, Citibank Savings vice president, said the bank had positioned itself to capture fresh opportunities in fast-growing Davao City, the financial center of southern Mindanao and a gateway to the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean subregional economic growth area.

"We want to corner the mass affluent in Davao City. We also want to offer our products and services to the entrepreneurs—the pineapple, banana and tuna exporters. There's also an emerging mining industry here," Azura said.

Northwest Palawan basin now attracting big companies, says exec

By Abigail L. Ho

AUSTRALIA'S NIDO PETROLEUM LTD., through local arm Nido Petroleum Philippines Pty. Ltd., has committed to aggressively explore for oil and gas resources in the Northwest Palawan Basin and, eventually, conduct drilling and production activities in the area.

In its 2006 financial statement, the company said its strategic focus for the year contained three elements, one of which was the aggressive exploration on the petroleum blocks covered by its Service Contracts 54 and 58.

Nido said it would "aggressively pursue exploration activity in the Northwest Palawan Basin, (including) acquiring 3D seismic in SC 58, and processing and interpreting seismic acquired in 2006 to develop leads and prospects inventory for subsequent drilling campaigns."

In an interview late last year, Nido deputy managing director Joanne Williams said the company would invest $3.2 million in SC 58 and $2 million in SC 54 this year.

For SC 58, which covered 1.3 million hectares, she said the $3.2 million would be used for the conduct of a 3D seismic survey over the area.

Additional seismic surveys would be conducted in SC 54, which covered 540,000 hectares, she said.

In 2006, Nido spent $11 million for the two service contracts: $3.4 million for a 2D seismic survey in SC 58 and $7.6 million for a 3D seismic survey in SC 54.

Nido managing director David Whitby said in an earlier interview that the Northwest Palawan basin was now "becoming a place where big companies want to be in."

"The basin has been fairly under-explored, but the prospects are very large. It's good that Nido was there first," he said.

Another strategic focus of the company this year would be the Galoc oil field, which it hoped would produce first oil by early 2008.

Galoc Production Co. (GPC), which operates SC 14C, is scheduled to drill two production wells between August and October. This will entail an investment of $86.4 million.

GPC owns 58.29 percent of SC 14. Nido is the second biggest shareholder with a 22.28-percent stake.

Williams said Nido had earmarked $20 million this year for the development of the Galoc oil field.

BIMP-Eaga: 13 glorious years

(First of two parts)

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

REGIONAL COOPERATION CAN PLAY A CENtral role in the progress of individual countries and entire regions, even when different political systems are involved.

Whether the issues at hand are economic, social, or environmental, regional cooperation can accelerate development by drawing on mutual strengths. It reduces risk and uncertainty and increases each country's capacity to deal with negative developments when they occur. It strengthens community cohesion and regional stability.

In both good times and bad, regional cooperation can be a powerful instrument for reducing poverty, promoting peace, and facilitating sustainable development.

Every Mindanawan can remember that at the height of the economic boom in Southeast Asia in 1994, the Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines East Asian Growth Area (BIMP-Eaga) was launched. The Eaga regions, with the exception of Brunei Darussalam, share common characteristics: Considerable geographic distance from their respective capital states, significant development gaps between the sub national and national economies, and resource-based subregional economies that are less developed than the capital regions. The BIMP-Eaga initiative, thus, was the key strategy of the four participating governments in addressing this economic imbalance.

BIMP-Eaga aims to spur and sustain growth in identified less-developed and geographically proximate areas. Its goals are clear: To increase trade, investments, and tourism in the subregion through freer movement of people, goods and services; to develop vital infrastructure in the subregion, and coordinate the management of ecosystems and common resources to ensure sustainable development.

BIMP-Eaga has a wide range of economic synergies, which—if efficiently harnessed—could transform it into a major investment destination in the Asean for agro-industry, natural resource-based manufacturing, and tourism.

Its strategic operational focus is to accelerate private sector-led economic development, improve export competitiveness, and to enhance the attractiveness of the Eaga to local and foreign investments based on complementary economic factors, shared natural resources, information and technology, and the specialization and regionalization of production.

In a joint statement during the Third BIMP- Eaga Summit last Jan. 21 in Cebu City, the subregional groupings took special note that BIMP-Eaga has moved forward with very concrete results after decades of developing and enhancing four-country cooperation. It reaffirmed its commitment to further deepen the cooperation within the overall objective of narrowing development gaps in the Asean and for the realization of the Asean community.

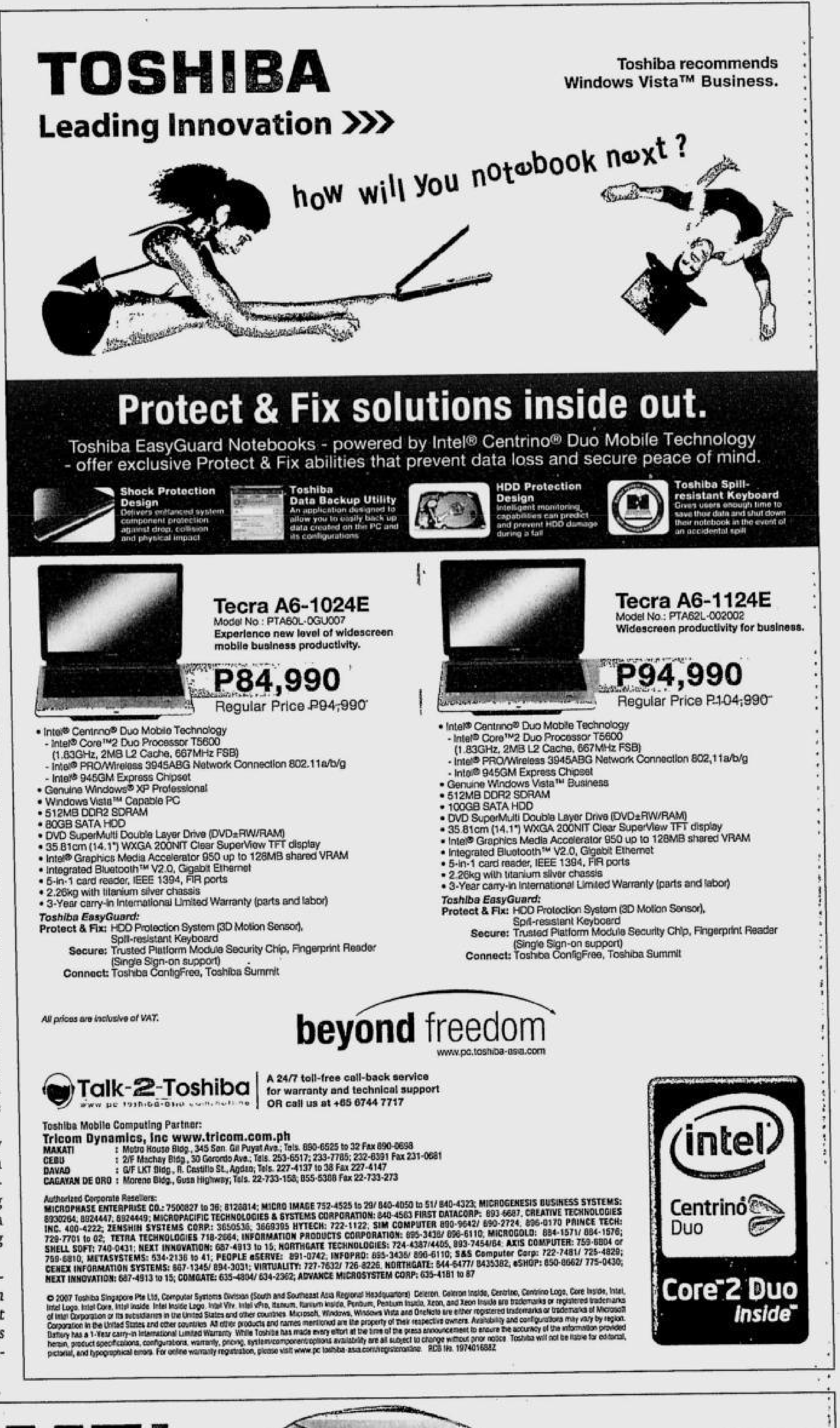
The progress achieved in the implementation of the BIMP-Eaga Roadmap to Development 2006-2010, was encouraging. Several flagship projects have been realized in its implementation, including the completion of the BIMP-Eaga database on cross-border trade, investment and tourism; the implementation mechanism for the roadmap; preparation of the energy action plan; conduct of joint trade and tourism promotion activities; finalization of the guideline on pilot-testing Asean measures/program in BIMP-Eaga, and forging of stronger partnership with the Eaga's Development Partners and international development agencies.

Recognizing the importance of transport connectivity toward accelerating the economic development in the subregion, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on expansion of air linkages including the granting of fifth freedom traffic rights for passenger and cargo services in the airports of Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam; Balikpapan and Pontianak, Indonesia; Kota Kinabalu and Kuching, Malaysia; and Davao City and Zamboanga City in the Philippines. It was further recommended to adopt a subregional multilateral or bilateral interstate transport and transit transport agreements in order to further facilitate cross-border movement of people and goods.

This phenomenal success would open up the BIMP-Eaga to other markets not only travel but also on trade. There were mentions of opening up of new routes particularly in the Northern Territory with possible new routes to Darwin. Other areas would involve the four countries in the Eaga in activities in the sustainable fuel and halal industries. Indonesia will be putting up a Philippine Trade Center in Manado this year with the physical structures and other related aspects already in place. Philippine products, especially those from Mindanao, will be opened to other markets once they are displayed at the center.

The tourism sector, as one of the primary users of transport services, is also playing a big role in ensuring the sustainability of existing transport linkages. A strong marketing program aggressively promoting BIMP-Eaga as a single tourism destination are being planned.

(Joji Ilagan Bian, an advocate for Mindanao, is chair of Mindanaworld Foundation Inc., representative to the Export Development Council and president of Filipino Call Centers Alliance. E-mail comments to jojibian2@yahoo.com)



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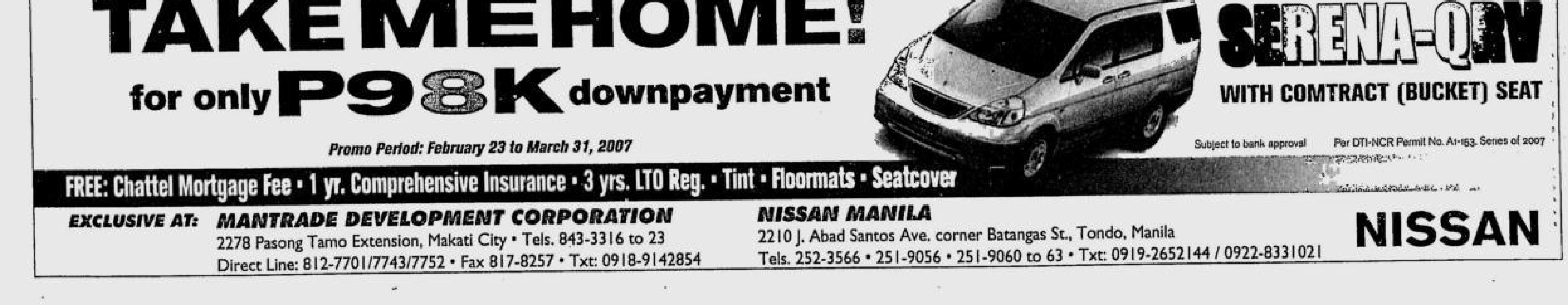

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NISSAN

Alcantara group raises equity in Tampakan gold project

Share swap with Australian partner

By Daxim L. Lucas

ALSONS CORP., THE PRIVATE HOLDING company of the Alcantara Group, has entered into a share swap agreement with its Australian partner Indophil Resources NL, effectively increasing its stake in the Tampakan copper-gold project in South Cotabato.

Under the scheme, Alsons will exchange its existing 5-percent stake in the Tampakan project—which it is developing with Indophil—for A$4.3 million and 37 million new shares in the Australian firm.

The transaction will be executed over three tranches as certain key project milestones are met.

As each milestone is achieved, Indophil would receive approximately one third of Alsons' existing Tampakan project interest.

Upon completion of the deal, Alsons will end up as the second largest shareholder in Indophil, the company said in a statement.

"This strategic partnership with Indophil ensures our long-term commitment as a partner in the Tampakan project and other prospective mining projects to be undertaken by Indophil in the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific region," Alsons chair Tomas I. Alcantara said, welcoming the deal as a strengthening of his family's firm in the local mining industry.

"We are confident that the project, which now has the backing of global copper giant Xstrata, will live up to its potential as a world-class mine that will reap significant returns for the project stakeholders," he added.

Xstrata Copper, a major global mining company, recently exercised its option to acquire 62.5 percent of the Tampakan project, one of the largest undeveloped copper-gold deposits in the world.

In a separate disclosure to the Australian Stock Exchange, Indophil said it had "moved to increase its direct interest" in the Tampakan project "by agreeing to purchase Filipino partner Alsons Corp.'s 5-percent interest."

Indophil said the deal would "progressively lift its stake in the Tampakan project from 32.5 percent to 37.5 percent.

Xstrata Copper, the copper division of the major global mining group Xstrata Plc, will hold the remaining 62.5 percent as part of a separate agreement announced in late 2006.

Under this deal, Xstrata Copper would assume project management responsibilities for the Tampakan project on March 30, 2007.

The Tampakan copper-gold project holds an estimated two billion tons in deposits, with potential for further growth.

Based on current studies, Tampakan is a lifelong operation containing 11.6 million tons of copper and 14.6 million ounces of gold at a 0.3-percent copper cut-off grade.

It is poised to produce 210,000 tons of copper and 218,000 ounces of gold a year during its first 10 years of production.

The Tampakan project is held by Philippine firm Sagittarius Mines Inc., under the Columbio Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement that is a contract with the Philippine government.

In its statement, Indophil's managing director, Tony Robbins said the company is pleased to have secured an increased level of interest in, and increased exposure to, the Tampakan project.

"This is an excellent outcome for Indophil and its long-term partner Alsons," he said. "With Alsons emerging as a significant shareholder in Indophil, it is in both our interests to work closely together to develop the Tampakan deposit, and pursue other exploration and development opportunities in the Philippines."

DMCI to invest ₱3B this year in housing deals

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

DMCI HOMES INC., THE HOUSING ARM OF construction giant DMCI Holdings Inc., yesterday said it would spend at least P3 billion this year on five upscale projects to serve the middle-income housing market.

Alfredo Austria, managing director at DMCI Homes, said Tuesday night during a project launch at the Manila Polo Club in Makati, that roughly P1.5 billion would go to the initial phases of Tivoli Gardens in Mandaluyong City, a high-rise condominium.

The rest would go to other projects, such as Cypress Towers, a joint venture with Crown Equities Inc. in Taguig City.

Cypress will have three residential towers and units will be turned over to buyers starting next year.

DMCI Homes is also introducing its line of mid-rise or five-story condominium buildings.

These include the Riverfront Residences in Pasig, a joint venture with the Equitable PCI Bank group and Rosewood Point in Taguig City.

DMCI Homes is also developing the Alta Vista de Boracay. Studio and loft units are priced at between P3.9 million and P4.9 million each.

Aside from these projects, the property firm also plans to develop an 86-hectare property in Taguig to be dubbed Township Central into a mixed-use residential community that will house DMCI Homes projects like Cypress Towers and Rosewood Pointe.

The 86-hectare property will include mid-rise projects, high-rise condominiums and subdivisions.

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Republika ng Pilipinas
Republic of the Philippines
Kagawaran ng Tanggulang Pambansa
Department of National Defense

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

(PROCUREMENT OF AFP DEFENSE EQUIPMENT)

1. The Department of National Defense (Armed Forces of the Philippines), through the *AFP Modernization Program Act Trust Fund* and the *Department of Energy-Transferred Fund*, intends to apply the sum of ***SIX HUNDRED FORTY SEVEN MILLION FIVE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND PESOS (PhP647,550,000.00)*** being the total *Approved Budget for the Contract* (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Acquisition of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Defense Equipment.

2. The DND/AFP now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the rebidding of the various AFP defense equipment, as follows:

NAME OF PROJECT	QTY	APPROVED BUDGET OF THE CONTRACT	COST OF BIDDING DOCUMENT
1. PA Upgraded M113 APC Project	6	Php 144M	Php 25,000.00
2. PA Global Positioning System (GPS) Handheld Receiver	3,159	103.550M	25,000.00
3. PAF UH-1 Helicopter	10	400M	40,000.00
TOTAL		Php 647.550M	

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the *Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A* (IRR-A) of *Republic Act No. 9184* (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "*Government Procurement Reform Act*," and is open to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in *Section II* of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the *Lowest Calculated Bid* (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the *Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder* (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the *DND Bids and Awards Committee* (DND BAC) *Secretariat* and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address specified below from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount specified above. The method of payment will be in cash or thru cashier's check. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

6. The DND BAC will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **March 29, 2007 at 1:00 P.M.**, DND Conference Room, 3rd Floor, DND Bldg., Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address on or before the schedule stated below. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any form and corresponding amount allowed under RA 9184 and its IRR-A. Late bids shall not be accepted.

8. Bid submission and opening shall be on the following dates at **9:00 A.M.** at DND Conference Room, 3rd Floor, DND Bldg., Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City:

PROJECT	SCHEDULE
1. PA Upgraded M113 APC Project	April 13, 2007
2. PA Global Positioning System (GPS) Handheld Receiver	April 16, 2007
3. PAF UH-1 Helicopter	April 17, 2007

9. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below. Only bids from manufacturers or their representative of the aforementioned system/equipment will be entertained.

10. To facilitate eligibility checking, manufacturers and/or prospective bidders who wish to participate in the public bidding may apply for registration with the DND BAC, through the DND BAC Secretariat, at least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled submission and opening of bids for the procurement of the projects they wish to participate in, pursuant to *DND BAC Cir 01-2005* dated 12 May 2005.

11. The DND/AFP reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

DND BAC Secretariat
DND/DMO Annex Bldg., Camp Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo
Quezon City, Philippines 1110
Tel. No: (632) 911-6001 local 8414
Telefax No: (632) 421-3531
Email: bacsecretariat@dnd.gov.ph
Website: www.dnd.gov.ph

(SGD) ASEC ROBERTO G NUQUI
Chairman, DND BAC

(PDI – March 22, 2007)

China's Shimao in $2-B hotel deal in RP

CHINA'S SHIMAO PROPERTY HOLDINGS Ltd. will invest at least $2 billion in hotel chains in the Philippines under long-term leases with the government, said Trade Secretary Peter Favila.

Favila told Reuters that the chairman of the Shanghai-based property group informed President Macapagal Arroyo on Tuesday night that his group would sign leases with the state firm Bases Conversion Development Authority to put up hotels in Fort Bonifacio on the outskirts of the Makati financial district and in Quezon City.

The group is also looking at other properties outside the capital, such as in the southwestern island of Palawan, Favila said. *Reuters*

Omico group woos Ivanhoe

PUBLICLY LISTED OMICO CORP. IS FINALIZING the terms of a possible joint venture involving Omico's gold mine in Benguet with the group led by Canadian mining giant Ivanhoe Mines.

Omico president Tommy Kin Hing Tia declined to give further details, however, citing the sensitivity of the talks at this stage.

While talks are ongoing, he said Omico would pursue a three-for-one stock rights offer from which it hopes to raise P260 million.

The proceeds will be used to pursue future joint ventures and buy new mining assets.

To allow new investors to come in, Omico also approved a plan to increase its capital stock to P2 billion, a portion of which may be issued to interested investors.

Omico has a mining agreement with Macawiwili Gold and Mining Development Co. to operate the latter's 119 mining claims covering 837 hectares in Itogon, Benguet.

The agreement was first struck in September 1968 and was extended for another 25 years in January 1996. *Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson*

DISCLOSURES

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. director Albert F. del Rosario has bought 4,000 shares for P2,265 each and 14,000 shares for P2,270 each on March 16.

* * *

LAWYER Rolando L. Justo has resigned as director of **Universal Rightfield Property Holdings Inc.** and **Universal Leisure Corp.** effective March 20.

CHINA Banking Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 3, 4 p.m. at the Penthouse, China Bank Building, 8745 Paseo de Roxas cor. Villar St. in Makati City. Stockholders of record as of March 21 are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting. ***Compiled by Kate Pedroso, Inquirer Research***

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 21, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	10.25	10.5	10.25	10.5	87,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	56	57.5	56	57	1,006,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	63.5	64	63.5	63.5	2,039,100
China Banking Corp.	870	870	870	870	100
Citystate Savings Bank	20	20	20	20	300
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.52	0.55	0.52	0.54	50,840,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	100	102	100	102	50,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	58.5	59	58.5	58.5	1,084,400
Philippine National Bank	47	47.5	46.5	47.5	1,700
Phil. Savings Bank	62	62	62	62	1,000
Security Bank Corp.	74	74	73.5	73.5	139,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	57.5	58.5	57.5	58	45,600
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	6.6	6.8	6.5	6.6	1,204,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	5.5	5.6	5.5	5.6	24,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	37.5	37.5	37.5	37.5	10,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1630	1630	1630	1630	1,920
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.86	1.86	1.86	1.86	32,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	670	680	665	665	810
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2150	2150	2150	2150	2,110
Ivantage Corp.	1.52	1.56	1.52	1.56	4,126,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	6	6.1	5.9	6	24,756,000
First Gen Corp.	53.5	55.5	53.5	54.5	1,357,200
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	70	70.5	70	70	520,400
Manila Electric Co. A	68	70	68	69	98,400
Manila Electric Co. B	69	71	69	70	1,738,800
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9	9.1	9	9	254,000
Petron Corp.	4.35	4.45	4.35	4.45	1,911,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.28	0.3	0.27	0.3	8,110,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.42	1.44	1.38	1.44	1,292,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.7	3.95	3.7	3.8	96,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	25	25.5	24.5	25	11,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	53	53.5	53	53.5	203,700
RFM Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.48	2.5	2.48	2.5	130,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	20,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63.5	63.5	63.5	63.5	45,000
San Miguel Corp. B	72	72.5	72	72.5	75,100
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.28	2.36	2.26	2.3	2,936,000
Universal Robina Corp.	17.75	17.75	17.5	17.5	519,400
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.68	1.7	1.66	1.68	10,731,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.55	4.75	4.55	4.75	4,056,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	58,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8.5	8.6	8.5	8.6	123,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4.85	4.95	4.85	4.9	3,602,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	80,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	8,880,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.013	0.016	0.012	0.016	2,459,800,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.014	0.017	0.013	0.017	333,700,000
Ayala Corp.	550	550	540	545	174,910
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.74	0.78	0.74	0.78	860,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.2	5,739,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	7	7	6.8	6.8	220,000
AJO Net Holdings Inc.	0.075	0.075	0.0725	0.075	40,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.35	3.4	3.35	3.4	405,000
APC Group Inc.	0.37	0.45	0.37	0.42	91,260,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	465,800,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.58	1.6	1.56	1.56	4,703,000
PAL Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.65	3.5	3.65	120,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.45	277,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.9	118,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	3.35	3.45	3.35	3.4	21,635,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.9	7.1	6.9	7	384,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	5	5	5	5	10,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.29	0.33	0.29	0.33	670,000
House of Investments Inc.	2.4	2.65	2.4	2.65	991,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.75	13	12.75	12.75	207,100
Keppel Holdings	1.56	1.56	1.56	1.56	7,000
Medco Holdings	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	1,530,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	9.2	9.4	9.1	9.2	970,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	2.18	2.36	2.18	2.34	10,824,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.26	0.28	0.26	0.27	6,050,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	3,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	170,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.25	0.31	0.235	0.31	294,650,000
SM Investments Corp.	350	355	350	352.5	232,720
South China Resources Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	30,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	40,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.19	0.22	0.19	0.22	6,160,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	15.5	15.5	15.25	15.5	3,570,700
Belle Corp.	1.42	1.5	1.38	1.46	20,283,000
A. Brown Co. Inc.	1.24	1.28	1.24	1.28	107,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.47	1,000,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.75	3.8	3.75	3.75	515,000
C&P Homes Inc.	2.44	2.8	2.44	2.7	588,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	200,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	300,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.74	0.74	9,420,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.86	1.86	1.84	1.84	800,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.08	0.12	0.0775	0.105	125,000,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.62	1.64	1.6	1.62	32,311,000
Gotesco Land, Inc.	0.26	0.31	0.26	0.31	6,350,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.25	0.32	0.25	0.3	3,600,000
Interport Res.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	2,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	9,700,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.47	0.49	0.46	0.47	2,030,000
City & Land Developers	3	3	3	3	5,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.82	0.84	0.82	0.83	7,830,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.021	0.021	0.021	0.021	1,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.95	3.05	2.95	3	21,671,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	10,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.85	0.89	0.8	0.88	24,530,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.22	700,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	18.75	19.25	18.5	18.5	2,106,500
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.59	0.62	0.59	0.61	3,590,000
SM Development Corp.	3.75	3.8	3.65	3.75	1,239,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	11	11	10.75	11	4,208,700
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.7	310,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.21	0.26	0.205	0.245	109,800,000
Zipporah Rlty Hldgs Inc.	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	10,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25	25	24.75	24.75	59,800
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	57,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.68	1.7	1.66	1.7	7,309,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1300	1305	1295	1300	42,350
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.9	6.9	6.8	6.8	1,314,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2315	2395	2315	2390	116,120
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings, Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.245	0.25	15,590,000
Diversified Fin. Network	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
Imperial Res.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	600,000
IPVG Corp.	6.4	6.5	6.3	6.4	3,763,000
Island Info And Tech Inc.	0.0575	0.0675	0.0575	0.065	20,300,000
Ism Communications Corp.	0.0625	0.065	0.0625	0.065	3,300,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	27,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.16	2.16	2.1	2.1	99,000
Philweb Corp.	0.045	0.046	0.045	0.046	215,200,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	90,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	2,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	30	30	28	28.5	2,216,200
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	1.16	1.22	1.16	1.16	4,301,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	3.7	3.95	3.7	3.95	5,576,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.36	0.4	0.36	0.37	710,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	131,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	1.06	1.08	1.02	1.04	23,011,000
EDUCATION					
Ipeople Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	390,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.6	2.65	2.6	2.65	351,000
Paxys Inc.	26	26	26	26	88,400
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	4.95	5	4.95	5	90,000
Apex Mining Co., Inc.B	5	5.2	5	5.1	35,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	67,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	10.25	10.25	10	10	1,811,000
Benguet Corp. A	11	11	10.75	10.75	17,400
Benguet Corp. B	32	32	32	32	1,800
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.6	13,000
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	1.62	1.66	1.58	1.6	52,945,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	10,160,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	3,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	100,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.033	0.033	0.033	0.033	73,300,000
Omico Corp.	0.018	0.02	0.017	0.02	3,383,500,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.3	4.35	4.3	4.3	4,132,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	21	21.5	21	21.25	122,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.75	0.75	0.72	0.73	790,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.22	1.24	1.2	1.2	1,450,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.45	0.52	0.45	0.52	38,710,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	11,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.014	13,200,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.013	44,500,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	30,000

CURRENCIES

March 21, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.750694	1.000000	48.5940
Japan	Yen	0.006401	0.008527	0.4144
United Kingdom	Pound	1.473163	1.962400	95.3609
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.096090	0.128002	6.2201
Switzerland	Franc	0.619691	0.825491	40.1139
Canada	Dollar	0.646537	0.861252	41.8517
Singapore	Dollar	0.491871	0.655222	31.8399
Australia	Dollar	0.600459	0.799872	38.8690
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.991284	2.652590	128.9000
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.200196	0.266681	12.9591
Brunei	Dollar	0.490266	0.653083	31.7359
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000082	0.000109	0.0053
Thailand	Baht	0.022972	0.030534	1.4838
UAE	Dirham	0.204449	0.272346	13.2344
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.332100	64.7321
Korea	Won	0.000798	0.001063	0.0517
China	Yuan**	0.097020	0.129241	6.2803
Argentina	Peso	0.2422355	0.322841	15.6881
Brazil	Real	0.361955	0.482160	23.4301
Denmark	Kroner	0.134266	0.178856	8.6913
India	Rupee	0.017246	0.022973	1.1163
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.214760	0.286082	13.9019
Mexico	New Peso	0.067566	0.090005	4.3737
New Zealand	Dollar	0.527877	0.703185	34.1706
South Africa	Rand	0.101720	0.135501	6.5845
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.022656	0.030180	1.4666

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—March 19, 2007
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen. ** Asian time closing rate as of March 19, 2007

Death Notices

VIRGILIO R. GARCIA

Joined his Creator on March 15, 2007 at the age of 66.

His body lies in state at their residence, 1050 F. Yuseco St., Tondo, Manila.

Interment will be on Saturday, March 24, 2007 at 9:00 am at the Manila North Cemetery.

--oOo--

TEOFISTO M. MANSUETO

joined his Creator on March 18, 2007 at the age of 81.

His body lies in state at the chapel og Brgy. 604 Zone 60, Bagumbayan St., Sta. Mesa, Manila.

Interment will be announced later.

> "...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
> — 2 Corinthians 5:8

Lovingly Remembered, So Sadly Missed
on his First Death Anniversary

† Capt. Teofilo T. Calimag, Jr.

Ret. 747-400 Captain
October 16, 1939 – March 22, 2006

Masses for him will be offered in the following churches:

Abbey of Our Lady of Montserat (San Beda College)	7:00 AM
Santisimo Rosario Parish Church, U.S.T. España, Mla.	7:00 AM
La Naval de Manila, Sto. Domingo Church Q.C.	8:00 AM
Redemptorists Baclaran Church	5:45 PM
Sacred Heart Parish, Kamuning Q.C.	7:00 AM
St. Jude Shrine San Miguel, Mla.	8:00 AM
Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, Quiapo, Manila	10:00 AM
Our Lady of Snows Parish Church, Enrile Cagayan	6:00 AM
Parish of the Lord of Divine Mercy, Sikatuna Village, Q.C.	6:00 PM
St. Joseph Shrine, Anonas Q.C.	12:00 PM
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Shrine, New Manila, Q.C.	7:00 AM
Basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate Concepcion Church, Q.C.	6:00 AM

His loving wife, Iderlina; Children **Capt. Jerome L. Calimag**, Wife **Elaine, Atty. Peter L. Calimag, Teofilo L. Calimag III & Jean,** Grandchildren: **Ma. Katrina, Anna Patricia, Sofia Andrea, Kevin Mathew, Nicollo Angelo**, brothers, sisters, cousins, nieces & nephews request other relatives, friends and all those whose lives he touched to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Atty. Delfin L. Gonzalez Sr.
and his children
Federico, Jaime, Jorge, Delfin Jr., and Maria Regina

regret to announce that

our beloved Mama

Aurea Carballo Gonzalez

the love that binds us,
the "firefly" that lights our path,

died in the loving embrace of Our Lord
at 7 o'clock in the morning of
Wednesday, 21 March 2007.

Mama's remains will lie in state
from Thursday to Saturday, March 22 to 24,
at La Funeraria Paz, Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque City.

Mama is also survived by her grandchildren Carissa, Miguel, Enrique, Luis, Ana, Gabriel, Miren, Martin, Marie, Antonio, Monica, Isabelle, Luisa, Jose, Michael, Paolo and her great-grandson Enzo; her daughters-in-law Nenette, Connie, Puri, and Nannie; son-in-law Ralph W. Horne, and her sisters Pilar and Lourdes.

Instead of flowers, a small donation to the Don Bosco program for street children in Alabang, Muntinlupa City will be appreciated.

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PAG-IBIG	A22
DECS	B6

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NAME OF DECEASED	PLACE OF VIEWING	INTERMENT/CREMATION	
		DATE & TIME	PLACE
JOSEPH EDELMUNDO G. DIPASUPIL (ashes)	Sta. Maria Dela Strada Church, Katipunan Rd., Q.C.	March 24, 2007	to be announced later
DRA. NADINA UMALI	Chapel 14 Araneta Ave., Q.C.	March 22, 2007 11:30 a.m.	Paz Crematory

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CESAR HERMOSURA ANGELES

Peacefully joined his Creator
on March 20, 2007 at the age of 71.

His wife **Celia**; daughter **Maria Cecilia**; brother **Mario**; sisters **Flordeliza, Filipina, Amorita, Jesusa, Gracia** and **Kamlonie**; sisters and brothers-in-law **Eledita, Angelina, Benjamin, Francisco, Dario, Eduardo** and **Reynerio**; nephews and nieces; relatives and friends request your prayer for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the family reseidence in Molave St., El Rey Subdivision, Duhat, Santa Cruz, Laguna and will be brought to the Iglesia Filipina Independiente Church on Saturday, March 24, 2007 at 6:00 am.

Interment will be at the Himlayan ng mga Anghel, Sta. Cruz, Laguna on March 24, 2007 after the 1:00 pm Mass.

Col. Rodolfo Velasco Purugganan, PAF (Ret.)

of Fort Stotsenburg, Pampanga

Died in the grace of our Lord
on March 20, 2007 at the age of 81.

His loving wife **Lourdes Oyzon Purugganan**; children **Mae & Emil, Rodolfo, Jr. "Dodie"** (†), **Ramon "Chen" & Vivian, Alfonso, Dulce Carina**; and grandchildren **Dino Carlo, Shae, Sigrid, Raymond** and **Eunice** request the pious readers to pray for the repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at St. Ignatius Chapel at Camp Aguinaldo.

Interment will be on Saturday, March 24, 12 High Noon at the Libingan ng mga Bayani after the 9 a.m. Mass at the St. Ignatius Chapel, Camp Aguinaldo.

People, Events & Products

Review for realty broker's licensure exam

THE DEPARTMENT OF Trade and Industry has set another licensure examination for those aspiring to be licensed real estate brokers in May 27, 2007. With the prospect of another real estate boom as in the pre-1997 period, it is expected that many would be eyeing to position themselves as real estate professionals. In this regards, Urban Institute of Real Estate announced four schedules of its Comprehensive Real Estate Seminars (CRES) and review in Makati and Quezon City as follows:

Monday Afternoon Section will be on March 26, April 16, 23, 30, May 7 and 21, from 1:15 to 6:45 p.m, at Max's Restaurant, Glorietta 2, Makati; while Tuesday Evening Section will be on March 27, April 10, 17, 24, May 1, 8 and 22, from 6 to 10 p.m. at Max's Restaurant, Glorietta 2, Makati. The Saturday Afternoon Section will be at the same time and venue and will be held on March 24, April 14, 21, 28, May 5 and 12, while the Thursday Afternoon Section will be held at Max's Restaurant at Gateway Mall, Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City on March 29, April 12, 19, 26, May 3 and 10, same time slot.

Experts and authorities in their respective fields led by land laws specialist lawyer Dennis Tablizo, and engineer Enrico Cruz, 1st and 8th placer in the real estate appraisers and brokers board examination respectively, are lined up to lecture on the subjects officially prescribed by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Urban also announced that updated copies of "Comprehensive Notes and Reviewer For Real Estate Broker's Examination" prepared by engineer Enrico S. Cruz and lawyer Rex Enrico V. Cruz III are now available for distribution to aspiring examinees who will be taking the real estate brokers board examination.

Designed to support prospective examinees, the more than 280 page reviewer contains all the board exam topics with more than 200 past board questions and answers sorted according to board subject required by DTI. This reviewer will also be a handy reference for real estate developers, practitioners and property owners.

For other details or advance registration, Urban Institute may be reached at 681-0928 or CP# 0916-426-9174 or by e-mail at urbanet@pacific.net.ph.

Stand up comedy workshop

STAND-UP COMEDIAN ALLAN MANALO, ONE OF the first Filipino to do pure stand-up comedy here in the Philippines, will conduct an eight-week workshop on the classic (American) style of stand-up comedy at the Sierrra Center, #8 Libertad corner Sierra Madre Streets, Mandaluyong City every Saturday (1 to 4 p.m.) from March 7 to April 28. The workshop will cover the basic elements of stand-up comedy including conduct stage, microphone technique, how to find material, how to write a joke, setting up punch-lines, comic timing, stage persona, characterization and point-of-view, various stand-up styles, the "Tight Five", crowd control (reading an audience and handling hecklers), the comedy ladder and other gigs (comedy writer's life). The seminar will culminate in a special Next Wave Stand-up Comedy show featuring Allan Manalo, Tim Tayag and the graduates of the course. The fee is P 6,500 for the entire course inclusive of the show. It will be a front act before a live audience in a popular night spot. For those who want to book Allan Manalo and Tim Tayag for stand-up comedy shows, bar and campus tours or corporate events hosting, please call eCircle Entertainemnt at 533-9316 or 531-6284, text 0917-8860706 or e-mail info@ecircleentertainment.com for additional information and show schedules.

Photo contest and exhibit on the Rotary 4 way test

BEARING THE THEME "VISUAL EXPRESSIONS OF the 4 Way Test," the Rotary Club of Alabang and Ayala Alabang Camera Club have launched a photo contest and exhibit featuring the Rotary 4 Way Test this month. This activity aims to make the general public aware and more conscious of the Rotary 4 Way Test through photo presentation/expression. It will feature about less than a hundred entries depicting the Rotary 4 Way Test. The 4 Way test has been propagated by Rotarians through billboards, signages, and the like. Today it stands as one of the most widely printed and quoted statements of business ethics in the world. Photographs can also be a novel way in depicting the 4 Way Test for the general public to appreciate. Hence, part of the activity will exhibit the photo entries of the contest at the Chef's Avenue in Festival Mall, Alabang for two weeks starting May 11. Proceeds from this contest will go to the Tuloy Streetchildren's Village in Alabang. Tuloy is the Rotary Club of Alabang's flagship project. It admits poor and abandoned children, particularly street children aged 9-18, as residents. In Tuloy, they are taught discipline and values in all their activities. The Rotary Club of Alabang's vision is to continually assist Tuloy Foundation in its task of transforming the lives of streetchildren to useful and productive citizenry.

Hyundai Philippines tagged as DEP capital of the world

IN THE RECENT DEALER CONFERENCE HELD last February 8, at Sofitel Philippine Plaza, Hyundai Asia Resources Inc (Hari), the exclusive distributor of Hyundai vehicles in the Philippines, was officially hailed by Hyundai Motor Company (HMC) as the DEP capital of the world when 12 of its dealers were the first to qualify in the Hyundai Elite certification among over 5,000 Hyundai distributors and dealers across the globe. The Hyundai Elite certification is a title awarded by HMC to dealers worldwide who have passed the stringent standards set in the Dealer Enhancement Program or DEP. In 2006, 10 Hari dealers were awarded with the Hyundai Elite certification. Hari targets all of its 32 dealers nationwide to be certified by the end of this year.

Dr. Corrales launches book: 'The Leadership Relationship'

DR. RAMON G. CORRALES, PH. D., FOUNDER AND CEO of Corporate Mastery Inc, will be offering a series of lectures on his newly published book: The Leadership Relationship: The RISC Model for Building High-Impact Relationships. Published by Katha Publishing Co Inc, Goodwill's publishing arm, The Leadership Relationship's Book Launch is slated on March 23, Friday, 6 to 9 p.m. at Mandarin Oriental Manila, Makati Avenue, Makati City. He will be visiting major cities in the Philippines to present his model of leadership known as the RISC Model for building high-impact relationships. The Leadership Relationship will be available at all Goodwill Bookstore outlets (Glorietta, Legarda, Up Manila and Gateway), and also at Bridges Bookstore, building bridges of Goodwill at The New V-Mall, Greenhills Shopping Center, Metro Manila. For book inquiries and reservations, please call Katha Publishing Co Inc at tel. nos. 413-7690 and 413-9787. You may also call Goodwill Bookstore's advertising and promotions office at 895-8684 locals 131 and 133.

Bits & Clips

Big Bang's Burst o' Prizes

BIG BANG, THE EXCITING and crackly chocolate bar for adventurous individuals who choose to live life to the fullest, is bursting with surprises. With just a pop, you get a free taste of the sweet, unexpected crackly bite, rich chocolate and chewy nougaty goodness of Big Bang! Bring your barkada to Big Bang's Burst o' Prizes sampling booth at Metropoint Timezone in Pasay, or Timezone in Mall of Asia on March 24 or Timezone in Gateway, Cubao or Timezone in Market Market on March 25, pop a balloon to win Big Bang mini-bars you can all share. Schedule that barkada gimmick at these malls and catch Big Bang's Burst o' Prizes to get free Big Bang chocolate treats!

2GO supports 'Large 8': An exhibit on Photo-abstraction

LARGE 8: AN EXHIBIT ON PHOTO ABSTRACTION opens with works by national artist BenCab, Bien Bautista, Quincy Castillo, Emil Davocol, Pancho Escaler, Jojo Guingona, Wig Tysmans and Jaime Zobel. The exhibit, a larger that life experience with mounted works over 6 feet by 10 feet in size. Each artist will have 2 prints each making it a total of 16 photographic art pieces. Given the size of the material, the handling of the art pieces is no joking matter. 2GO, an Aboitiz company gave the artists peace of mind by moving the delicate material with utmost care and efficiency. 2GO allows clients to move anything, including items that require specialized packing and crating needs. The extensive network of 2GO also allows delivery and pick up anywhere in the Philippines making them the ultimate choice in transporting the Large 8 art pieces as it tours the country. The grand launch of the exhibit happened on March 8 at the SM Mall of Asia where it ran until March 19. The exhibit will then tour all other SM supermalls on the following dates SM Megamall (March 21-27); SM Baguio (March 29-April 9); SM Clark (April 11-17); SM Davao (May 9-15); SM The Block North Edsa (May 18-24); SM Bacolod (May 30-June 7) and SM Cebu (Aug. 8-14). For more information on 2GO's services, call (+63 2) 523-8747, log on to www.2go.com.ph or contact any of the 2GO branches.

Asia cautious before Fed; China hits record

SINGAPORE—SHARES IN ASIAN chip makers rose on Wednesday after strong earnings from US tech firms, and China's main index, which last month triggered a global sell-off, hit a record on gains in the resources and property sectors.

The dollar steadied after falling on a report China would stop stockpiling foreign exchange reserves, but traders were cautious ahead of a Federal Reserve policy meeting statement.

Caution before the outcome of the Fed meeting also hit share markets, with indexes in Australia, Hong Kong and South Korea all losing ground, although markets elsewhere in the region posted modest gains.

The US central bank was widely expected to hold its key interest rate steady at 5.25 percent, but financial markets will focus on the accompanying statement for clues on the health of the world's biggest economy and the outlook for interest rates.

The Fed was expected to announce its decision early this morning.

"Investors will be really looking to see whether an interest rate fall will be in the second or third quarter," said Guy Hutchings, chief investment officer at MFS Investment Management Ltd., in Australia. "Also, any comments on subprime mortgage risks will be a key focus."

Losses for lenders operating at the riskier end of the US home loan mortgage have raised fears of slowing economic growth and prompted a wave of selling in global markets last week.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia Pacific shares outside Japan was up 0.2 percent yesterday afternoon.

Australia's S&P ASX 200 fell 0.3 percent as a strong Australian dollar—which touched a 10-year high against the US currency—weighed on firms that derive a substantial proportion of their earnings from the United States.

China's main index—whose sharp drop late last month triggered a global flight from risk that sent equity markets tumbling—was up 0.5 percent, after earlier hitting an all-time high.

"More investors are entering the market," said analyst Zhou Lin at Huatai Securities. "Most investors are still bullish because of prospects for strong corporate earnings growth."

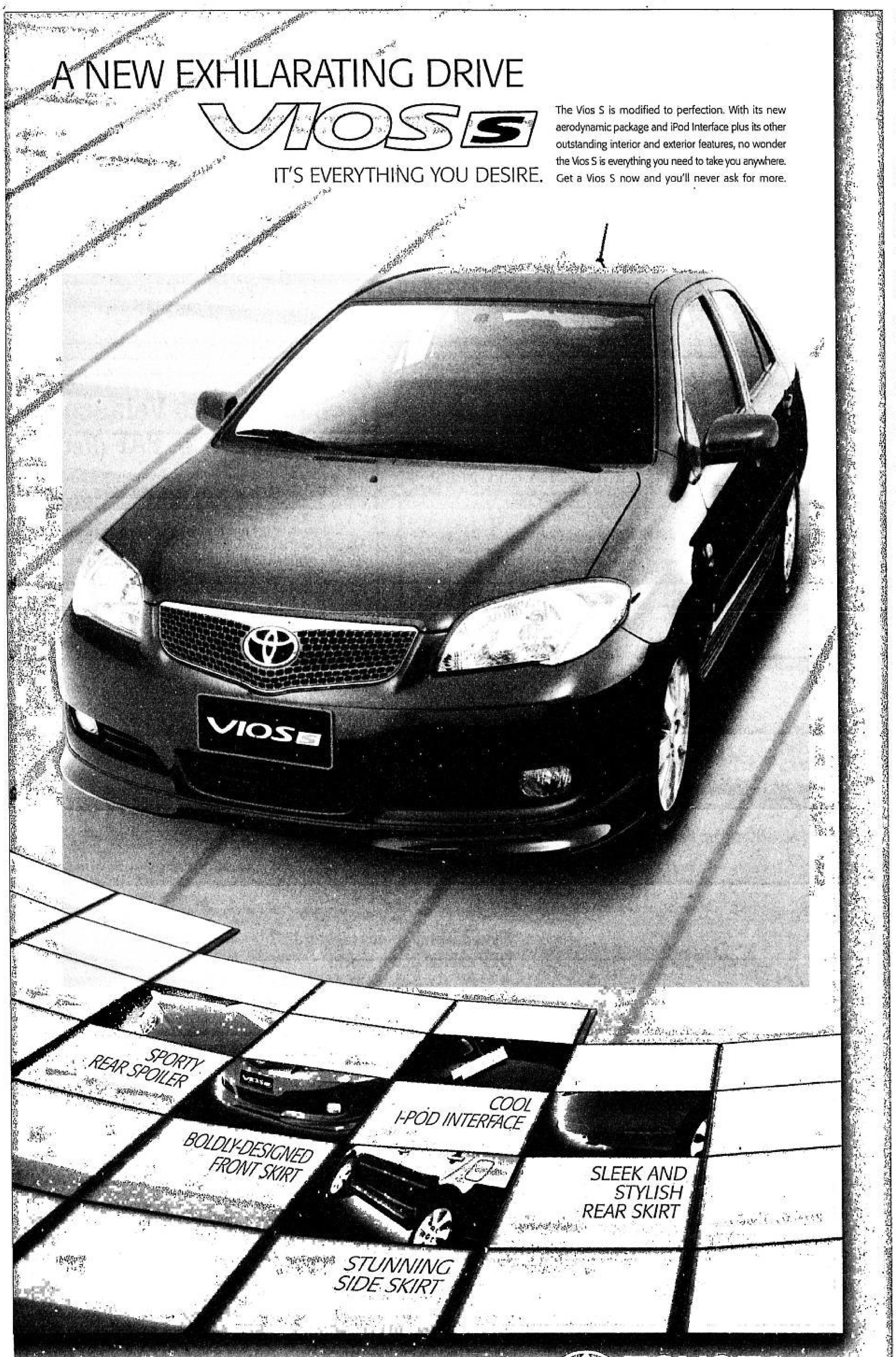
Taiwan's benchmark index rose 0.3 percent and Singapore's Straits Times gained 0.5 percent, but Seoul's main index slipped 0.1 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng was down 0.2 percent.

Oil recouped some of Tuesday's losses, as dealers braced for US government data later in the day expected to show a fall in fuel stocks amid robust demand. NYMEX crude for May delivery rose 25 cents to $59.50 a barrel.

Oil slumped to a six-week low at the end of last week and fell on Tuesday as traders feared a US housing market slump and China's move to raise interest rates at the weekend could weigh on economic growth, dampening fuel demand.

Gold traded around $659.20 an ounce, below a two-week high of $660.60 hit in New York on Tuesday, when a weaker dollar triggered fund and physical buying.

Reuters



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Signal Marine starts work on shipyard

By Aquiles Zonio
Inquirer Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—SIGNAL MARINE Shipyard Inc. has started construction of the country's newest ship building facility estimated to cost P240 million.

Signal Marine is a consortium actively involved in the development of the local tuna industry.

It has extended its reach abroad when it bought the fish cannery facility of Purefoods International in Indonesia.

Signal Marine's owners include Marfin Tan, Domingo Teng, Francis Laurel, RBL Fishing, Freddie Lim, Rufino Tiangco, Nelson Ong, Paul Tan and Ralph Fishing.

Tan, Signal Marine president, told the INQUIRER that the construction of the facility would be undertaken by Vercide Engineering.

He said construction would be done in phases, each costing about P80 million.

Tan said the facility, which can build ships carrying 3,000 metric tons of fish, was expected to be completed in 10 months.

He said the consortium was optimistic that the facility would further boost the city's multi-billion peso tuna industry.

"We have the second-biggest and most modern fish port complex in the country and with the completion of our shipyard, we will be attracting both local and foreign fishing vessels," Tan said.

Mayor Pedro Acharon Jr., who led the groundbreaking ceremony early this week, said he was happy that local businessmen have pooled their resources to pursue such a project.

"This project is labor-intensive so it will provide new jobs for the locals once the boat building and repair starts," Tan said.

Firms alarmed by Thailand's tuna proposal

By Dennis Jay Santos and Judy Quiros
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—THE ONGOING BILATERAL trade talks between the United States and Thailand have alarmed the country's tuna industry players.

Domingo Teng, president of the General Santos City-based TSP Marine Industry and also one of the most respected figures in the country's tuna industry, said Thailand has been asking the United States for the duty free entry of its tuna exports.

Teng claimed that if the United States agrees to Thailand's request, the Philippine tuna industry would eventually die because it would make Philippine exports more expensive.

The US slaps a tariff of 12.5 percent on tuna products from the Philippines.

"We urge the government to lobby for the same [concession as Thailand]," he said.

The tuna industry in General Santos exports $280 million worth of tuna every year.

It produces an annual fish catch of 500 metric tons, or over 10 percent of the world's fish catch volume, he said.

There are about 800,000 workers in the tuna industry, mainly in General Santos City.

Teng said if Thailand becomes successful in its bid, these workers, who deposit P12 billion a year to local banks, would eventually go hungry.

Teng said the tuna industry was one of the important sectors in the country as revenues from the sector continue to rise over the years.

He said the country's tuna industry has been growing at a rate of 5 percent a year as demand for alternative meat sources continues to increase in Europe.

Undersecretary Virgilio Leyretana of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco) said the government has not turned a deaf ear to the concerns of the tuna industry and would explore ways to protect it.

LIFESTYLE
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso
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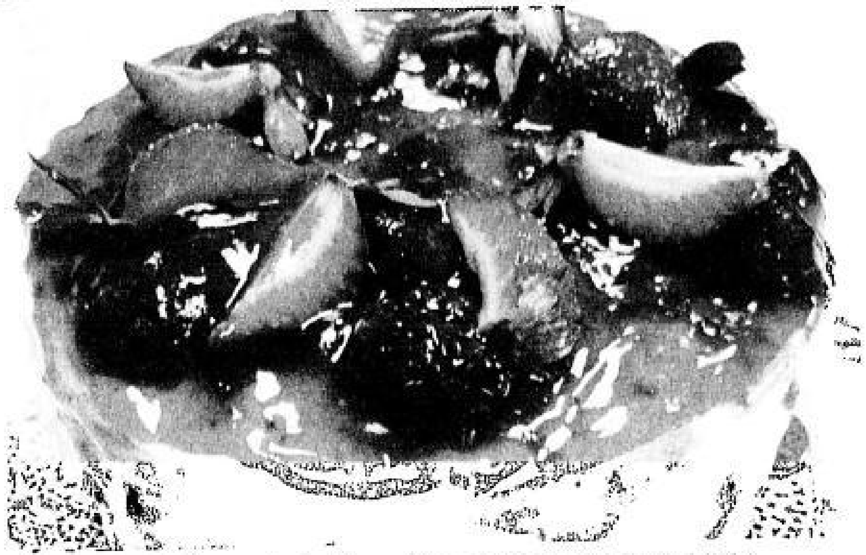
PUMPKIN, squash and cousins in the gourd family make for interesting centerpiece.



STRAWBERRY Shortcake by Karen Young is moist yet nice and light.

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

Decorate your table with vegetables

KITCHEN RESCUE IS FINALLY BACK TO Q&A. IT'S been quite a while.

Before tackling the questions, I just have to share this new discovery of mine. Had a party a few weeks back and used an assortment of decorative squash, pumpkin and other gourd types as centerpieces for my tables. Obviously, they stole the show!

No one could believe they were not made of plastic! They were given to me by my friend Rex Puentespina who, a few months ago, asked me if I thought planting decorative vegetables would be viable. Not so many moons later, he had the first crop of these gorgeous ornamentals.

Next time you have flowers made or when you set your table, get some of these. They make interesting subjects for hours of conversation, even among strangers! Call 9299306.

Sweet discoveries

Love the things you recommend and I miss your recommendations for desserts. I can cook but baking is just too much for me. Any suggestions and new discoveries?

MYLEEN

I sure do. Been wanting to do a list for a while due to many requests for a repeat of a column I did of my favorite things, which I think saw print last year. Didn't have an impressive list, though, so I decided to put it off. But since you asked for it, here it is.

Just looking at the photos of these two cakes, we already gained four pounds. But who cares? They are worth it!

Chef Jill Sandique's Pistachio Sansrival—Beyond words! The best sansrival ever! Everything about it is perfectly executed from the meringue to the butter cream filling which spreads generously and so evenly through each layer. But I expect no less from the queen of perfection. Every nut in place, just as Jill planned! Call 7217022.

Karen Young's Strawberry Shortcake—Again, the best I have tasted in recent years. The cake so moist, yet nice and light that it melts in your mouth while the strawberries have just a hint of tartness that perfectly complements the lightly sweetened whipped cream. Karen's banana cream pie and mini carrot muffins are yummy, too! Call 8982880 or 8982280.

Monterey's Lamb Barbecue—If you have not tried this you are missing half of your life. If you love lamb, and even if you don't, you must try this! The honey-glazed lamb shoulder chops are so, so good, too. All you have to do is go to Monterey, buy and grill! Go now!

Jumbo Pastillas by Iya—One piece satisfies the craving! Call 7290325.

Birthday surprise

It has been my practice to read your column on Thursdays since I always anticipate your recipes and clip them.

I would like to request for the following recipes:

- **Special delicious hamburger, which is quick to make**
- **Juicy and delicious steak marinade**
- **Arrabbiata pasta or seafood pasta with olive oil as base.**

It will be a surprise for my boyfriend's birthday this April 18. Thank you for your time and effort.

Very truly yours,
PINK PRINCESS

Oh, love! Look at what you do!

Pink Princess, I have not received a

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DINING OUT

Graduation day treat

TREAT YOUR NEW GRADUATE and the entire family to Eight Jewel Chicken and Fried Chili Crab at Coral Garden. A delicacy of the Hakka people of Guangdong province, the Eight Jewel Chicken is whole chicken deboned and stuffed with seasoned sticky rice. As the dish takes longer to prepare, order should be made in advance. Fried Chili Crab is cooked by adding salt, garlic and chili pepper before deep-frying. For light eaters, Coral Garden has Jellyfish with Chicken Salad consisting of roast chicken; jellyfish strips; slices of ripe mangoes, watermelon and cucumber; with a light and creamy dressing. This month Coral Garden also offers a set menu for 10 persons which includes Chili Crab, Eight Jewel Chicken and Jelly Fish Salad with mangoes. Coral Garden is in Banawe (tel. 7110255, 7121078) and Libis, E. Rodriguez Jr. Avenue, QC (tel. 6363781).

PEKING GARDEN celebrates graduation day with its own version of the Beggar's Chicken. The restaurant has added pickled Chinese cabbage, mushrooms, onions and other fine herbs to the chicken stuffing. It is recommended that the dish be ordered at least a day in advance. An affiliate of the Hong Kong Maxim's Group of Restaurants, Peking Garden is open daily for lunch and dinner. It is at 2/L, Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati. Call 8179066 or 8179067.

EDSA SHANGRI-LA celebrates graduation at any one of the its food and beverage outlets. If you are in a group of five, you get a photo mug plus the chance to win other cool souvenir items March 15-31. Heat offers all-time favorites like pizzas and *lechon* served fresh and crisp. You can also enjoy the exotic flavors of India and fiery Thai cuisine. Senju combines the best elements of Western tradition with authentic Japanese gastronomy. Summer Palace serves authentic Cantonese cuisine while Paparazzi offers rustic Italian dishes. Call 6338888 extension 2738 or 2739.

MAX'S launches "Power Breakfast" consisting of the classic Tapa Meal, a 60-year-old heirloom recipe of Max's founder Ruby Trota; Adobo Flakes by chef Gene Gonzalez; Pepperoni Omelet Meal; and Triple-Chocolate Champorado. Other items are Sausage Meal, Tocino Meal, Longganisa Meal and Bangus Meal. The Power Breakfast is available 7-10 a.m. daily.

KIMPURA Japanese Restaurant offers "3reats to Graduates." For a minimum food bill of P2,500++, diners will get a platter of *gyoza* (Japanese dumplings), *kani furai* (breaded crab sticks) and *tori karaage* (chicken lollipops) compliments of the house. The promo is available until April 15. Open daily for lunch and dinner, Kimpura is on the second level of Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati (tel. 8932307, 8928274); and Greenhills Shopping Center, San Juan (tel. 7218816, 7218851).

THE RICHMONDE GRILL offers buffet lunch consisting of soups, salads, appetizers, hot items and desserts. Cold items selection include prawns, crabs, oysters and mussels, as well as a variety of sushi and sashimi. Lunch buffet is served 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Sunday-Friday. Diners who will opt for the buffet get a complimentary glass of iced tea or soft drink. Download "Three for Two" coupons from www.richmondehotel.com and present them at the Grill. Groups of four that will avail of the lunch buffet pay for only three. Offer is valid until May 31. Call 6387777 local 3409 or 6898419.

CORAL Garden's Jellyfish with Chicken Salad

SHAKEY'S offers for the Lenten season the Captain's Choice Platter, fish fillet coated with Shakey's secret breading. It is served with Calamari Crunch and Belgian fries. The platter also comes with Shakey's Original Thin Crust Pizza. Call 77777.

COOKING CLASSES

Crab, chicken & meat cooking

THE REGGIE ASPIRAS SCHOOL OF CULINARY Arts offers the following classes: March 23: Crabs '07 (all new)—Crab Bisque with Brie Toasts, Tempura of Soft Shell Crab Salad, Tom Yam Crabs Stir Fry, Crabs in Pepper Sauce, Butter Crabs, Garlic Crab Roast, Soft-Shell Chili Crab.

March 24: Exciting Ways with Chicken (all new)—Appetizer of Chicken Cheesecake with Condiments, Stuffed Barbecued Chicken with Spicy Pineapple Barbecue Sauce, Apple Curry Chicken, Chicken with Truffle Risotto, Carbonara Chicken with Pumpkin Risonni.

March 26: Red Meat (all new)—Home-smoked Beef Carpaccio with Balsamic Glaze and Sweet Ginger Pesto, Delicious Surf and Turf with Rice Pilaf (Grilled Steak and Prawns with Choice of Four-butter Blends), Whole Leg of Lamb Buffet with Six Sauces and Four Side Dishes, 24-hour to-die-for Lamb Barbecue; soup and salad.

March 28: Stylized Pinoy Comfort Food (all new)—Chicken Skins "Chicharon" Marinated in Shrimp Paste; Beef, Pork and Chicken Sinigang sa Bayabas, Sampalok at Manggang Hilaw; San Miguel Beer and Calamansi Roast Chicken (a stylized version of Inasal); Batchoy with Homemade Noodles and Puto; Pata Tim with Quapao; Crispy Pork Batok with Sauces; Chocolate Suman with Creme Anglaise. Call 9289296 or 9273008.

Hands-on cooking for youngsters

Dorothy's Cooking School will hold hands-on baking and cooking classes for children 10 years old and above with the following themes: cupcakes to bake and decorate; who stole the cookie from the cookie jar; no-bake delights; Asian platter; and a taste of Italy. For teeners and adults, cooking, baking and cake-decorating classes are offered such as the many ways to roast a chicken (beyond the usual *toyo* and *calamansi*), assembled desserts and many more. Call 7217735, 4167968 or 7217749. The school is owned by culinary expert and cookbook author Dorothy Ferreria, and is located in New Manila, QC.

Summer cooking for kids & teens

Maya Kitchen will hold the two-day Junior Culinary Workshop, 9 a.m.-12 nn, April 11-13. Kids 6-10 years old will be taught easy-to-prepare recipes. Fun activities are included in the sessions. For teens 13 years old and up, Maya offers Young People's Cook-in, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., April 24, 26, 28. Participants will learn to be comfortable in the kitchen and gain useful culinary skills. Hands-on classes will focus on diverse menus, techniques and creative presentations. Maya Kitchen is at 8/F, Liberty Bldg., A. Arnaiz Ave. (formerly Pasay Road), Makati. Call 8921185 or 8925011 local 108; e-mail mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph.

CAREER JOB
PACIFIC PALM PSRG Maybank IPAMS FedEx TeleTech World Vision PHILTOWN ESCA Jollibee Roche PNB telecare Delifrance TeleDevelopment ENSEMBLES DUTY FREE freeway RFM We love kids ENERGIA AGENCIA MORNINGDEW MANUFACTURING CHUNG LI KUAN GLOBE STAFF SOLUTIONS MARCUBIA WMG STAFFING ATOMIC PLDT SM SUPERMALLS West Corporation MAGSAYSAY XYZ143 SERVICES, INC. MEGAWORLD CHINESE GENERAL HOSPITAL AUDGIO Ideal Construction SOLID commando dobemarbi TCCIC RSM ROSE MANPOWER tallied co. VELVET 4D PACKAGING nicatand

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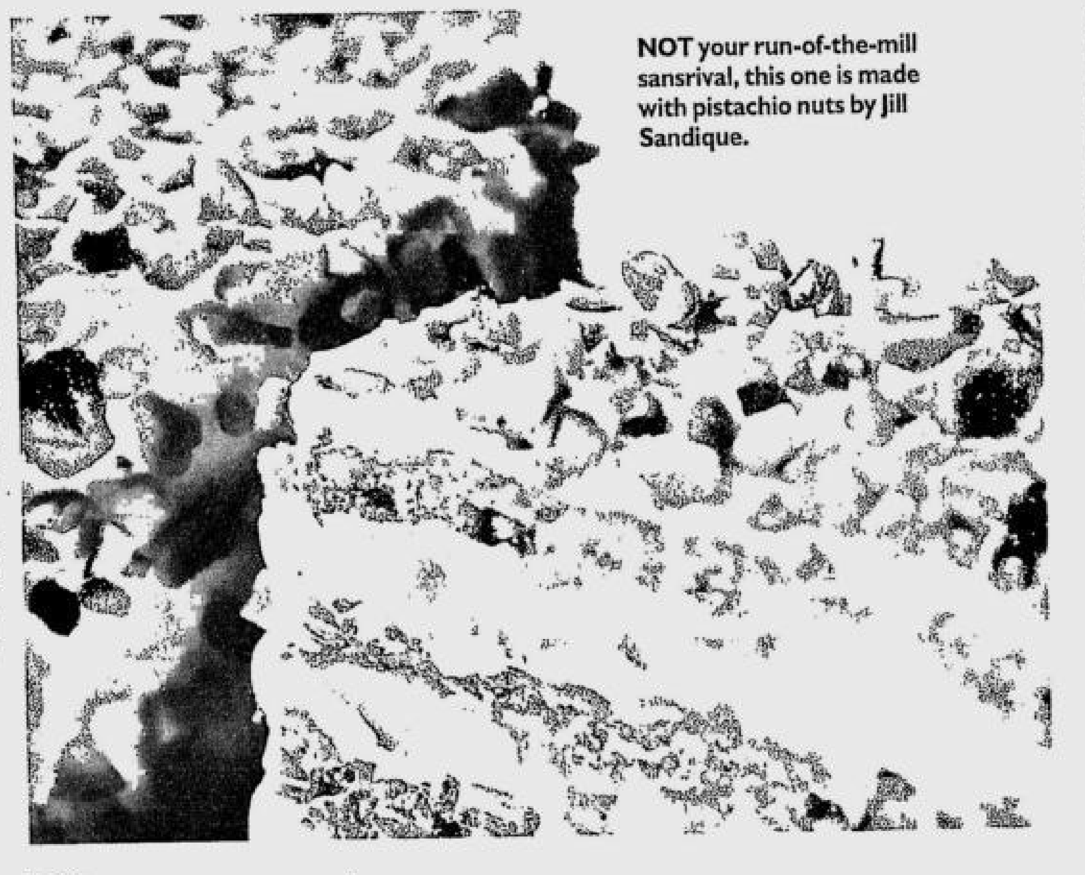


NOT your run-of-the-mill sansrival, this one is made with pistachio nuts by Jill Sandique.

Decorate . . .

From page C1

boyfriend request for quite some time, so here it is. Hope it makes Blue Prince happy and may you still be writing me 12 years from now with the same desire to cook, hopefully, for the same man!

Burger

This is one of my favorite burger recipes. Not only is it juicy, it's delicious, too!

1 k ground beef (70-percent lean, 30-percent fat)
2 tbsp garlic powder
2 tbsp onion juice derived from strained, grated onions or 2 tbsp onion powder
1 ½-2 tsp salt
2 tsp pepper
2 tbsp Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce

With gloves, combine ingredients and mix well until thoroughly blended.

The mixture should come to form a ball. It should be somewhat pasty. Form into patties.

Steak Marinade

I don't marinate my steaks, especially when they are of good quality. I just put salt and pepper right before grilling. Instead of a marinade, I suggest a good steak sauce and this is one of my favorites.

Steak Sauce:
¼ c olive oil
1/3 c onions, chopped
2 tbsp minced garlic
¼ c carrots, chopped
1 small can of canned whole tomatoes, chopped and seeded, include juice
1 tbsp molasses
1 tbsp Worcestershire Sauce
1 c honey
¼ c white sugar
3 tbsp brown sugar, or to taste
1/3-½ c sugar
1/3 c orange juice, optional
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
¼ c wine vinegar
1 c red wine
Chili or jalapeño pepper to taste

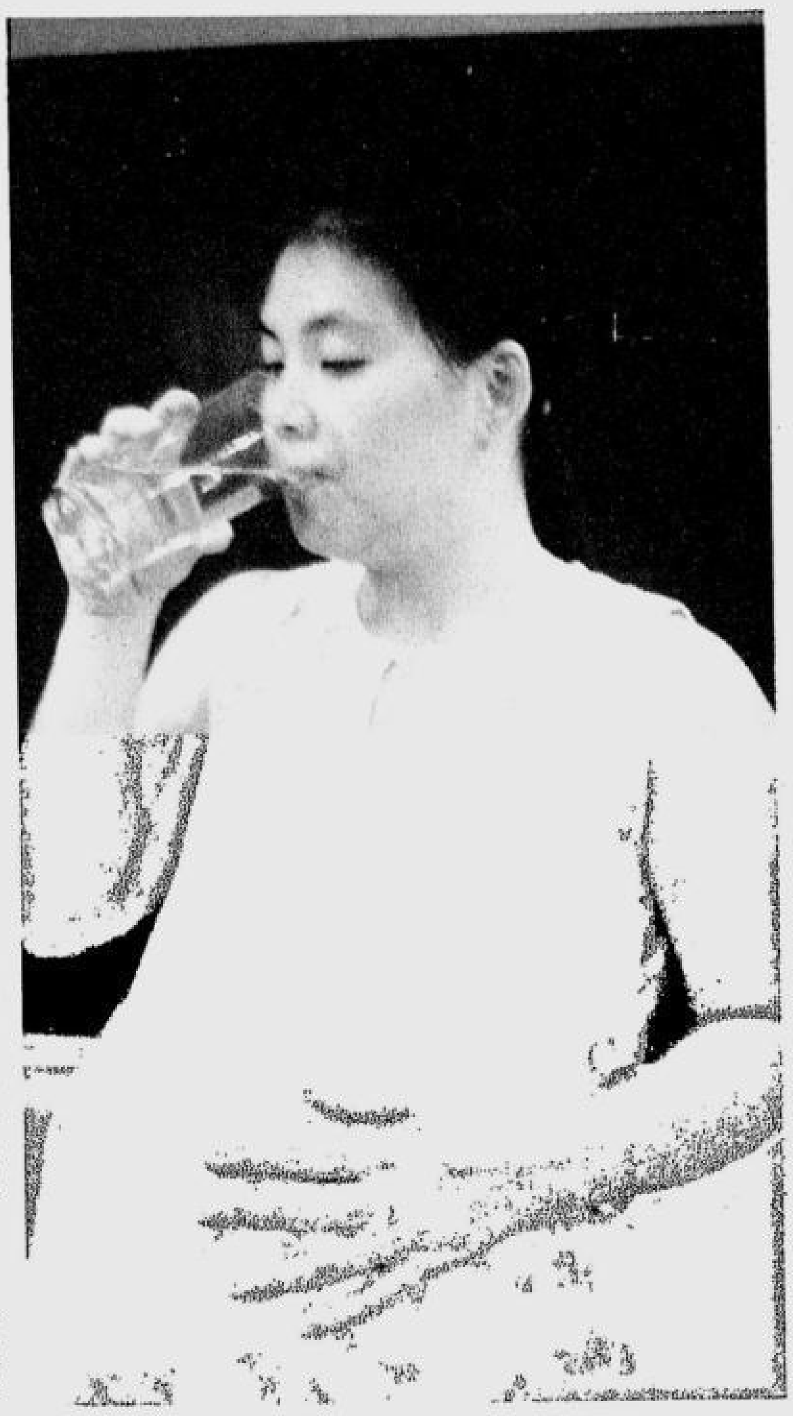
Saute onions, carrots and garlic in olive oil. Add the rest of the ingredients in saucepan, bring to a boil then simmer until thick.

Adjust salt, pepper, sugar and chili flakes to taste. Serve with grilled steak.

If he does not end up loving you more, someone else will! Happy birthday to the Prince! Your pasta recipe next week...

E-mail the author at raspiras@inquirer.com.ph.

Clean water is not just for drinking



CONTAMINATED water poses risks for both mother and baby.

EVERYBODY KNOWS DRINKING water should be clean and safe, as many diseases can be spread by contaminated water.

But while people are aware of the need to drink clean water, they sometimes fail to realize that even the water they use for other things, like hand-washing, should also be clean.

Good hygiene means clean water even for external use.

Dr. Georgina Pastorfide, a dermatologist, says it defeats the purpose of washing the hands and face if the water used is contaminated.

"If the patient has acne and uses unclean water as a facial wash, secondary bacterial infection (can occur aggravating the acne)," said Georgina, a fellow of the Philippine Dermatological Society.

"People who already have skin problems or have sensitive skin must make sure to use only clean water," she said. "If a sensitive skin gets exposed to some allergens that may be contained in the water, inflammation (can occur)."

Clean water for healthy skin

Georgina says people with atopic dermatitis or who are predisposed to inflammation usually have itchy skin. "If they use dirty water, their lesions will be irritated (which can) cause secondary infection."

Open wounds caused by scratching can worsen the infection by allowing bacteria to enter the skin.

Georgina also cautions against the use of contaminated water in cleansing women's private parts as it might cause vaginitis, a vaginal infection.

Pregnant women have to be extra careful to use only safe water for drinking and cleansing purposes as their unborn child might suffer from the contamination.

But the more serious risks of infection, like gastroenteritis and hepatitis A, are obviously caused by unsafe drinking water.

Dr. Greg Pastorfide, obstetrician-gynecologist, says unsafe water may lead to infection that can cause multiple organ failure.

DR. Greg and Dr. Georginia Pastorfide of the Cardinal Santos Hospital in Greenhills San Juan

Any deficiency or failure of an organ of the body can adversely affect a woman's pregnancy. It poses risks for both mother and baby, including the development of some abnormalities in the unborn child.

Risks for mother & child

He also notes that a pregnant woman who drinks contaminated water may develop an infection like typhoid fever. The medical problem can result in "dehydration and nutritional deficiency or under nourishment."

Greg stresses that pregnant women, the elderly, and children are at greater risk of contract water-borne diseases.

E. coli (Escherichia coli) is one of the bacteria most commonly associated with intestinal problems. Water can be infected with E. coli resulting in diarrhea and stomach cramps. Other possible sources of E. coli contamination are undercooked meat and un-pasteurized or raw milk.

Greg advises pregnant women "to make sure that you are taking clean, non-contaminated water because it is a first step in preventing medical problems."

Another hazard that may come from water is lead poisoning. Water from pipes or that gets in contact with solders are at risk of lead contamination. Lead is transmitted through drinking water running through pipes in the household. Lead poisoning causes damage to brain, kidneys, and nervous system.

The Pastorfides believe that periodic testing of pipes in households and commercial establishments is very important. Testing, they stress, must be done on a regular basis to ensure the safety of water used by people.

Water testing lab

In an attempt to address these concerns, Qualibet (Quality is Better) Testing Laboratory was set up. Founded by chemist Pinky Tobiano, the laboratory aims to provide every Filipino with clean water.

Qualibet tests the quality of water in residential and other areas, as well as in hospitals. Tobiano uses her profession to pursue an advocacy that is sometimes overlooked by designated agencies.

Though operating for only eight months, Qualibet has already gained the trust of government agencies. It has been accredited by and is working closely with the Departments of Health, Trade and Industry, and Agriculture, and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Qualibet not only tests water quality but has also been tapped to test the quality of agriculture, marine, and other animal products.

A recent test done by Qualibet found that water in some subdivisions in urban areas were actually infected with disease-causing bacteria.

Tobiano started her advocacy on clean water and established Qualibet after overcoming cancer of the thyroid three years ago.

Qualibet is a member of the American Association of Analytical Chemists. It has already gained its ISO-9002 certification in less than a year of operation. *Marlet D. Salazar*

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Rubbing you the right way

THE PREPARATION OF MEAT WITH SPICES and spiced sauces dates back to the ancient Roman and medieval times when cooks used peppers to flavor meats.

Spreading globally, the practice has reached the Philippines, where at least three ways of preparing steak—*bistek*, fried in butter and barbecued—have become popular.

But knowing that the Filipino palate was constantly in search of new and more flavors, Monibel Juliette Tabora-Dychiao, founder of the restaurant Steak MD, came up with the concept of flavoring steak by rubbing the meat with different herbs and spices.

Now, Filipinos can enjoy their steak in many different ways. The process is also better for the heart as it does not involve the use of gravy that are filled with calories and cholesterol.

Tabora-Dychiao sought to revive the styles of preparation from the Romans to Early-American cowboys. The different steak flavors she has developed range from *malasa* to sweet and spicy.

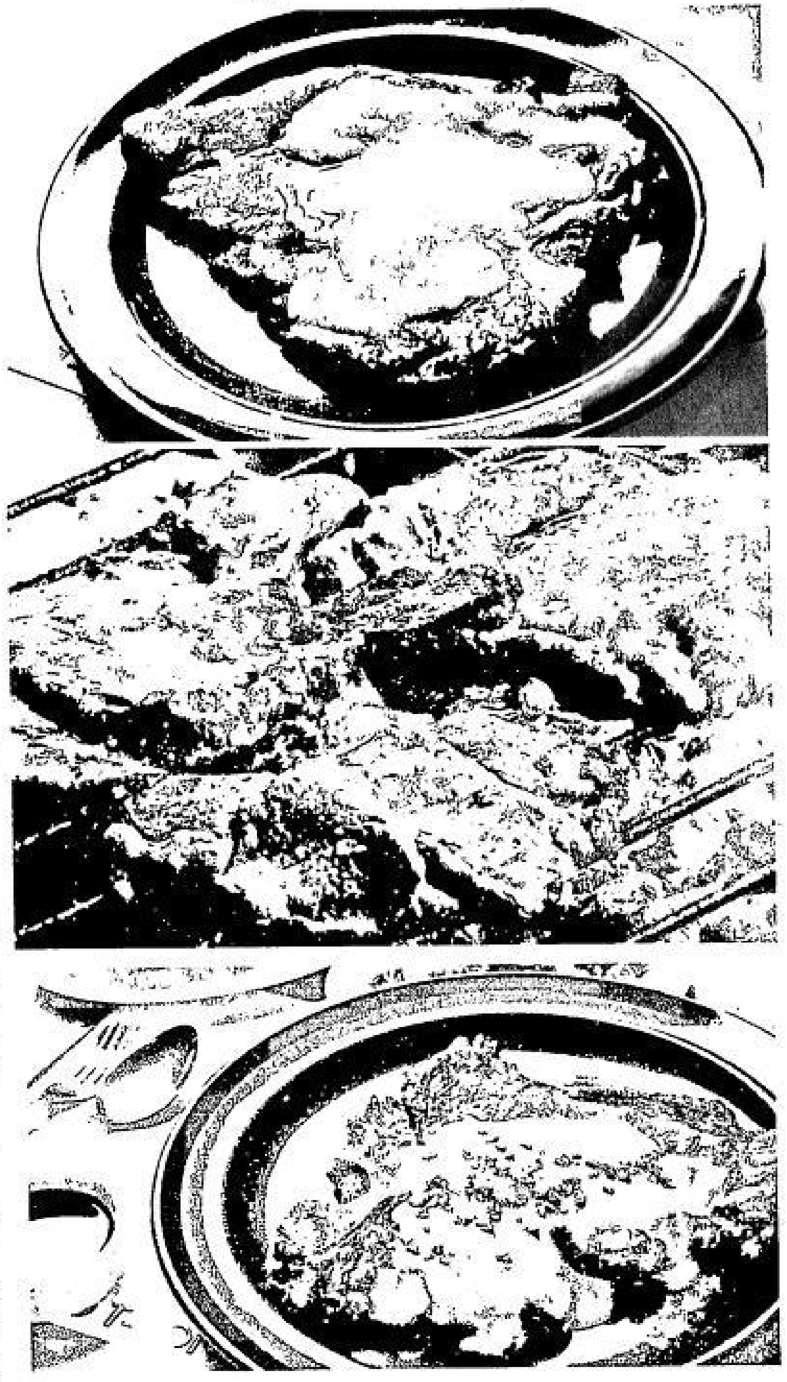
Steak MD dry rubs release the flavors of various spices into trimmed steak. Depending on the intensity of the variant's flavor, the rubbed meat can be left in the refrigerator to marinate or can be cooked immediately.

Some of the flavors available are the hot-and-spicy Atomic Rub; the sweet-and-spicy Ang Charub (Ang Sarap); the garlic-filled Heart Rub (Heart Throb); the creamy Build Me Up Butter Rub topped with lemon, garlic, and parsley; and Steak MD's all-time classic, Rub Ko To, made with the restaurant's own secret blend of spices.

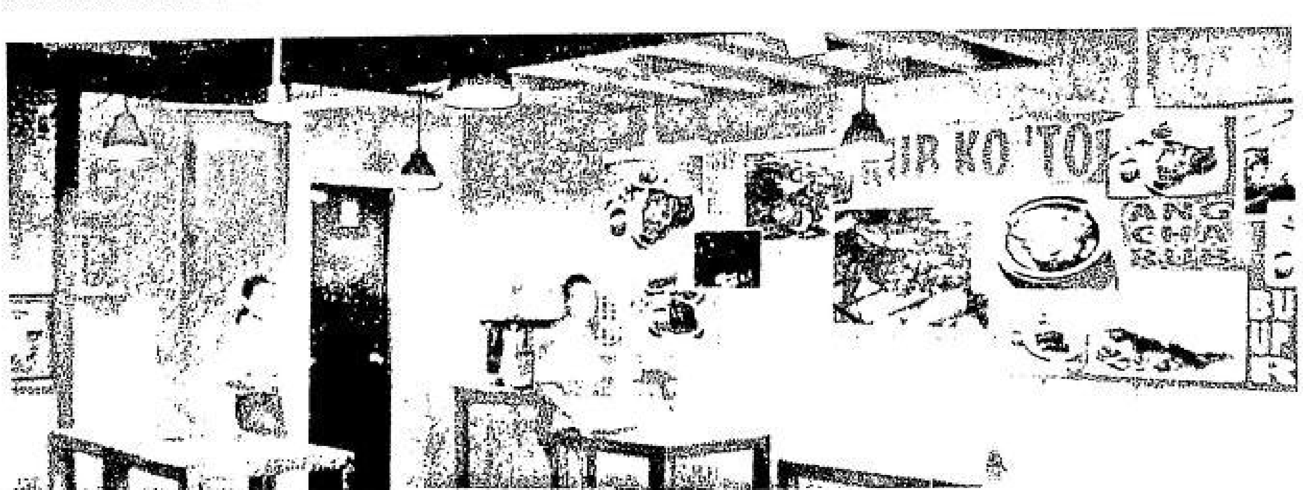
Diners can also have their own, personalized steak rub prepared.

The restaurant's prices are relatively affordable, a steak costing as low P150 a piece.

Steak MD branches are at Creekside Square Building, Tomas Morato, QC; and the new Paseo de Sta. Rosa 3, Greenfield Development Park, Sta. Rosa, Laguna. Soon, Steak MD offerings can be enjoyed in Petron Branches. Call 4487845.



STEAK MD dry rubs release the flavors of various spices into trimmed steak.



STEAK MD really rubs you the right way with steak costing as low as P150 apiece.

HENY SISON
CULINARY SCHOOL
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

THE ESSENTIAL COOKING SERIES: This 20-day hands on class is our innovative way of teaching the basics of cooking & baking. This program is for anyone who wants to work towards becoming a professional chef. Class begins April 11 – June 15, 2007. Classes are held every Wednesdays & Fridays from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Tuition fee includes ingredients, manual, aprons, chef's jacket and chef's kit.
For more information call 726-5316 or 412 7792 and ask Rita or Jenny

April 2(Monday)9 00 a m – 1 30 p m (classroom A) BASIC CAKES & ICINGS FOR BEGINNERS by: Heny Sison *Butter Cake with Butter Icing, Moist Chocolate Cake with Fudge Icing, Mocha Cake with No-Melt Butter Icing, Lemon Chiffon Cake with Boiled Icing & Sponge Cake with Whipped Cream Icing P1,500

April 2(Monday)2 00 – 5 00 p m (classroom A) BROWNIES & BARS by: Heny Sison * Chewy Moist Brownies, Carrot Cake Bars with Cream Cheese Icing, Lemon Cheesecake Bars, Brownies with Caramel Center & Butterscotch Bars P1,500

April 2(Monday)10 00 a m – 4 00 p m (classroom B) GUILT-FREE SWEET TEMPTATIONS by: Chef Juan Carlo Estagle, one of our school's home-grown chefs who has proven his mettle as Executive Chef of Mezze Restaurant and Bar at Greenbelt 2, pastry consultant of Bakeshops and chef consultant to other multinational food brands Let Carlo show the tricks of giving in to those tempting sweets yet avoiding the fat and the carbs Recipes include various kinds of Fat-free Yoghurt Cheesecake with Fat-free crust, Fat-free Vodka Cake, Apple-Banana Bread Pudding, and Fat-free Carrot Cake He will also show you how to whip up a totally fat-free, sugar free whipping topping from scratch. P1,500

April 3(Tuesday)10 00 a m – 4 00 p m (classroom A) JAPANESE COOKING I (All Time Favorite Japanese Recipes) by: Chef Koichi Kondo, licensed cook from Ehime, Japan and food consultant to various Japanese restaurants* Miso Soup, Tempura, Nimono, Yakimono, California Maki, Chilled Soba, Noodles with Nori, Skewered Dumplings with Brown Sauce. P1,700

April 3(Tuesday)9 30 a m – 4 00 p m (classroom B) PHILIPPINE REGIONAL CUISINE PART I by: Chef Sam de Leoz, Food Consultant, Stylist, Photographer, Caterer, Food demonstrator and Culinary Competion Events Consultant specializing in Basic & Classical Cookery, International & Asian Cuisine Taste and experience the flavours of our very own popular Filipino regional delicacies Recipes: Ilocanda Pinapaitan, Laoag Empanada, Nothern Dinuguan, La Paz Batchoy, Albay Pinangat, Bicol Express and Railway Sizzling Sisig Demonstration w/ student participation. P1,850

April 10(Tuesday)9 00 a m –5 00 p m (classroom A) SECRETS NO MORE! by: Heny Sison *Decadent Chocolate Cake with Fudge Icing & Caramel Sauce, Lemon Torte, Ensaymada, Almond Sanzrival, Strawberry Shortcake & Ube Cake. P3,000

April 10(Tuesday)10 00 a m. – 4 00 p m (classroom B) BREAKFAST & BRUNCH COOKERY by: Chef Vivian Syyap, Private Chef Caterer, Associates in Occupational Studies, Culinary Arts, with honors The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, New York *Eggs: Boiled (coddled, soft-boiled, medium-boiled, hard-boiled), Baked, Fried (sunny-side up, over easy, over medium, over hard), Poached – basic and variation, Scrambled – basic and variation and Omelet – French style or rolled: Frittata/Tortilla or Flat, Hollandaise Sauce Pancakes: Basic Pancake with variation French Toast, Hash Brown Potatoes, Lyonnaise Potatoes Quiche(Basic Shortcrust Pastry & Quiche Lorraine), Chocolate Chip Pancake, Waffles and Basic Crêpe Recipe P1,700

April 11-12(Wednesday-Thursday)9 00 a m – 4 00 p m (classroom A) CAKE DECORATING COURSE I by: Heny Sison *Learn the basics of cake decorating icing, color, star, shell, dots, outline and scallop borders, the rose, figure piping clowns & booties Each student will bake & decorate a character birthday cake. Full participation. P4,000

April 12(Thursday)10 00 a m. – 4 00 p m (classroom B) NEW CLASS! COFFEE SHOP BEST SELLER CAKES by: Chef Vicki Villanueva, from Stars & Bizu, let Chef Vicki share with you her wealth of knowledge and experience of patisseries and restaurant concepts, skills, techniques & operations.* The Ultimate Chocolate Cake, Rum Butter Cake, Mango Cheesecake, Strawberry Shortcake and Ube Chiffon Cake Reservation is Requested! P2,650

April 13(Friday)9 30 a m – 12 30 p m (classroom A) ALL ABOUT FRENCH MACAROONS PART II by: Chef Vicki Villanueva *Learn step-by-step preparation A most sought after give away for Valentines and Weddings Flavors include: Tiramisu Macaroons, Green Tea, Salted Caramel, Hot Cinnamon and Black Forest Reservation is requested! P1,850

April 13(Friday)1 30 – 5 00 p m (classroom A)NEWCLASS! COOKIE WORKSHOP by: Chef Vicki Villanueva * The Best Chocolate Crinkles, The Ultimate Fudgy Brownie, Chocolate Chip Cookie, Butterscotch and Food for the Gods, Dulce de Leche Bars Reservation is requested! P1,950

April 14(Saturday)10 00 a m. – 4 00 p m (classroom A) INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE COOKING by: Chef Koichi Kondo * Learn all-time favorites Japanese dishes applicable to home & professional cooking such as Sushi, Sashimi, Sukiyaki, Miso Soup, Tempura, Teriyaki, Udon Noodles in Clay Pot, Chicken Teriyaki & Japanese Fried Rice P2,500

April 16(Monday)9 30 a m - 12 30 p m (classroom A) NEW CLASS! EASY CHINOY PAMBAHAY 3 by: Chef Katherine Sion, restaurateur (Ding Hao & Fat Kat restaurant), caterer and an expert in Chinese cuisine.* Birthday Misua Soup, Saute Chicken w/ Cashew Nuts, Mapo Bean Curd, Fried Squid w/ Garlic and Oriental, Salad, Sizzling Tenderloin Steak and Chocolate Chip Peanut Cookies A reservation is required. Inclusive of lunch also bring your own personal apron. P1,650

April 16(Monday)1 30 – 5 00 p m (classroom A)NEW CLASS! EASY PINOY PAMBAHAY II by; Chef Katherine Sion * Pancit Molo Soup, Adobong Baboy at Manok, Sizzling Bangus Belly w/ Oriental Sauce, Fried Shrimp w Butter Sauce and Chopsuey Guisado and Mango Supreme Reservation is required. P1,650

April 16(Monday)9 00 a m – 5 00 p m (classroom B) FOOD CART IV - HOUSE OF ENSAYMADA by: Chef Vicki Villanueva. 5 new Recipes of Ensaymada: Almond Praline Ensaymada, Ensaymada Majorca, Ensaymada de Malabon, Commercial Ensaymada and Special Ube Ensaymada Demonstration w/ student participation. Reservation is Requested! P2,650

April 17(Tuesday)9 30 a m – 12 30 p m (classroom A) LET'S BOTTLE UP! by: Chef Juan Carlo Estagle, Putting up food for future enjoyment is a decidedly old-fashioned pursuit. Yet more and more cooks today are rediscovering it and even making a business out of it. In this course, you'll learn everything you need to know to bottle and preserve food efficiently, safely, beautifully; and of course, with delicious results The outcome is sure to be a rainbow of jars filled with Dalandan Marmalade, Ginger Marmalade, Bacalao Filipino, Tawilis Sardines, Tuyo Pasta Salsa, Tomato Pasta Salsa, and even pickled onions and quail eggs P1,500

April 17(Tuesday)1 30 – 5 00 p m (classroom A) NEW CLASS! DELI IN A BOTTLE by: Chef Juan Carlo Estagle. A follow up course on the Bottle Up Class Here we will learn how to make the classic Dulong in Olive Oil, Dulong with Sundried Tomatoes, Fish Roe Salsa and dip, Bangus Sardines in Tomato Sauce, Special Bagoong (from scratch) and a special Chocolate Vodka drink P1,500

April 17(Tuesday)10 00 a m – 5 00 p m (classroom B) NEW CLASS! MEAT PROCESSING II (Featuring Chicken) by: Chef Vicki Villanueva. Learn to process Each student shall be assigned whole chicken to butcher and debone Recipes: Chicken Ham, Chicken Popcorn, Skinless Chicken Longganisa, Fried Chicken, Lechon Manok and Chicken Relleno. Hands-on class. Reservation is Requested! P2,700

April 18(Wednesday)10 00 a m – 4 00 p m (classroom A) BARBECUE WITH SAUCES & DIPS: WORKSHOP by: Chef Sam de Leoz Hands-on Barbecue Workshop providing innovative method prepared for small entrepreneur and caterer in order to pay the way for business opportunities and increase the revenue for the coming holiday season *Spicy Buffalo Wings w/ Blue Cheese Dip & Celery Stick, Famous Aling N2 Barbecue w/ Melitzanosalata (Spicy Over Gin Dip), Indonesian Mixed Satay Mixed Beef & Lamb w/ Sambal Kacang (Peanut Sauce), Yakitori w/ Mango Black Bean Salsa, Grilled Seafood Medley Prawns, Scallops & Fish Fillet w/ Mustard – Dill Vinaigrette, Grilled Sausage w/ Cilantro Aioli Dip, Amorgozo (Ampalaya) & Smoked Fish Morsels w/ Cottage Cheese & Garlic Crunch Dressing, Java Rice P2,000

April 19(Thursday)10 00 a m – 4 00 p m (classroom A) COFFEE CLASS by: Chef Aileen Anastacio, owner of Goodies N' Sweet Bakeshop & C'est Si Bon, Dean's list graduate of Culinary at the California Culinary Academy* If you are planning to open a coffee shop this course is for you Learn the four fundamentals of coffee brewing, home espresso, guide to steaming & foaming Make fun toppings & garnishes & master the art of coffee making Recipes: Caffé Latte, Caffé Mocha, Caffé Americano, Cappuccino, Espresso Macchiato & Espresso Con Panna, Almond Coffee Freeze, Icy Rum Coffee Cream, Toffee Coffee, Mudslide Malt, Mocha Rumba, Rocky Road and more! P3,000

April 19(Thursday)10 00 a m – 4 00 p m (classroom B) SWEET BUT SUGAR FREE CAKES I by: Chef Jacqueline Ang Po, Pastry Chef of Fleur de Lys Patisserie, dean's list graduate, California Culinary Academy* Classic Desserts like Strawberry Cheesecake, French Apple Pie Chocolate Cake, Banana Chocolate Muffin, Poppy Seed Cake, Carrot Bars w/ Cream Cheese Icing, Chocolate Walnut Cookies. For people who are conscious of sugar intake 1,800

April 20(Friday)9 00 a m – 12 00 p m (classroom A) BAKED PASTAS by: Chef Aileen Anastacio. Recipes: Beef Lasagna, Vegetable Lasagna, Chicken Macaroni, Baked Spaghetti and Baked Seafood Pasta. P1,800

April 20(Friday)1 00 – 5.00 p m (classroom A) BAKED PASTAS II by: Chef Aileen Anastacio. *Spinach, Ricotta and Mushroom Canneloni, Meat Canneloni with 2 Cheese, Baked Ham, Brocolli and Cheese Fusili, Seafood Lasagne & Sundried Tomato and Eggplant Lasagne P1,800

April 21(Saturday)9 00 a m – 12 00 p m (classroom A)HEALTHY GOURMET - SOUTH BEACH DIET PHASE 1 by: Jacqueline H. Alleje, *This class is suitable for all people who want to be able to cook healthy dishes, lose weight considerably and people with health concerns such as diabetes, high blood pressure and other dietary restrictions The class will guide you through the principles of healthy nutrition, South Beach Diet phase 1 'Swiss Pinoy Style', which uses locally available ingredients Complete menu plan and recipes for 14 days of Phase 1. P1,500 plus P700 recipe booklet for Phase 1

April 21(Saturday)1 00 – 4 00 p m (classroom A) HEALTHY GOURMET – SOUTH BEACH DIET COMBO CLASS PHASE 2 and 3 by: Jacqueline H. Alleje * This class is suitable for all people who want to learn how to cook healthy dishes, deepen their knowledge of nutrition and weight control, as well as people with health concerns, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and other dietary restrictions This class teaches wholesome recipes which reintroduce carbohydrates with complete recipe booklets for phase 2 and 3 of the South Beach Diet P1,500plus P700 per recipe booklet

April 23-25(Mon -Wed)9 30 a m – 1 00 p m (classroom A) NEW CLASS! LITTLE CHEFS by: Carmela Madrid. Welcome to the wonderful world of culinary for KIDS We have prepared child-friendly recipes and cooking activities that will surely make any parent proud Your precious ones will surely enjoy this 3-day HANDS-ON course: learning how to make exciting and special drinks, preparing exquisite snacks and cooking up an entire meal A great learning experience, a venue to meet new friends and a confidence booster for all kids out there AGES from 6 to 11 years old DAY 1 – Drink: Cool Blue Water Shake, Meat: Crunchy Chicken Fingers, Pasta: My Mac and cheese, Snack: Confetti Pretzels, Dessert: Floating Fruit Parfait DAY 2 – Drink: Goin Bananas Smoothie, Meat: Tex Mex Taquitos, Pasta: Summer Pasta Carbonara, Snack: Surprise Cone, Dessert: Chocolate SquaresDAY 3 – Drink: Chocolate Mint Frosty, Meat: Burger Pizza Entre: Chicken BBQ w peanut sauce, Snack: Banana Icicles, Dessert: Buried Treasure Cupcake P4,500

April 23(Monday)1 30 – 5 00 p m (classroom A)JAPANESE RICE TOPPING by: Chef Koichi Kondo Recipes: Oyako-don (Chicken & Egg on Rice), Gyudon (Beef Bowl), Tendon (Tempura Bowl), Katsu-don (Pork Cutlet Bowl), Soboro-don (Minced Chicken & Egg Bowl), Tori Teriyaki-don (Chicken Teriyaki) P1,700

April 23(Monday)10 00 a m – 4 00 p m (classroom B) CHINESE DELI by: Nestor Magrimbao, Baker, Ferna Corporation Recipes: Dice Hopia, Tikoy, Siopao Mongo, Buchi & Moon Cake Bonus Recipe: Hopia P1,500

April 24(Tuesday)1 30 – 5 00 p m (classroom A) PRESERVING THE HARVEST by: Chef Carlo Estagle *Shelves of glistening, jewel-like jars, filled with preserved fruits and herbs * That simple description sums up the rewards of canning and preserving With this simple skill, we can enjoy those seasonal fruits any time of the year. In this course, we'll learn the fine art of drying and making Candied Orange Rind, Candied Glass Lemons, Candied Pineapples, Apple Chips, and Mint Jelly P1,800

April 24(Tuesday)10 00 a m – 4 00 p m (classroom B) NEW CLASS! CHARCUTERIE BASICS (SAUSAGE WORKSHOP) by: Chef Vivian Syyap * Learn the art of curing, brining, and basic sausage-making Featuring: Fresh Corned Beef, Pastrami, Breakfast Sausage, German Bratwurst, Frankfurter, Smoked Sweet Italian Sausage Please reserve 3 days before. P3,500

April 25(Wednesday)1 30 – 5 00 p m (classroom A) SUSHI CLASS by: Chef Koichi Kondo *Temaki-Zushi (Do-It Yourself Sushi Rolls), Bara-Zushi (Scattered Sushi), Inari-Zushi (Sushi Pockets), Futo-Maki Zushi (Thick-Rolled Sushi), Teka-Maki (Hand-rolled Tuna Sushi), Kappa-Maki (Sea Cucumber Sushi) and California Maki P1,700

April 26(Thursday)10 00 a m. – 4 00 p m (classroom A) DIFFERENT CHOCOLATE CAKES by: Chef Jacqueline Ang Po * Chocolate Fudge Cake, Flourless Chocolate Walnut Cake, Sachertorte, German Chocolate Cake and Warm Chocolate Souffle Cake P1,500

April 26(Thursday)9 30 a m -12 30 p m (classroom B) NEW CLASS! EASY PINOY PAMBAHAY 3 by: Chef Katherine Sion * Pochero at Enseladang Talong, Ginisang Monggo, Pinangat na Tulingan, Mechadong Baka at Lengua, Meatloaf and Ice Buko with Nata Reservation is Required! P1,650

April 26(Thursday)1 30 – 5 00 p m (classroom B) NEW CLASS! PINOY KAKANIN AT IBA PA! by: Chef Katherine Sion * Palitaw, Pulong Puti, Suman sa Lihiya, Sinukmani, Ginataan na Bilo-Bilo and Kutsinta Reservation is required. P1,650

April 27(Friday)10 00 a m – 4 00 p m (classroom A) KOREAN COOKING I: A WORKSHOP by: Chef Cecile Park, owner of Silla Korean Restaurant & food consultant to various Korean restaurants in Metro Manila *Beef Bulgogi (Tenderloin & ordinary), Chicken Bulgogi, Pork Bulgogi, Chap Chae, Mi Yuk Guk (Soups Seaweeds, Beef or Tahong), Bibimbap & Kalbi Jim P2,500

April 28(Saturday)9 00 a m – 12 00 p m (classroom A) MUFFIN WORKSHOP by: Jacqueline H. Alleje * Muffins can be considered the healthier alternatives to doughnuts and cinnamon buns They are good to eat, and can be made with a wide array of nutritious and delicious ingredients Learn the perfect steps to perfect muffins and choose from 10 mouthwatering recipes Banana Yogurt Muffin, Chocolate-Ricotta Muffin, Spicy Raisin Muffin, Cocoa-Nut-Oatmeal Muffin, Sweet Potato-Walnut Muffin, Parmesan-Tomato Muffin, Chocolate-Cinnamon Muffin, and Low Fat Muffins Herbed Brown Rice, Carrot-Orange and Raisin Bran Muffin. Students may assist in the preparation of the muffins P1,500

April 28(Saturday)1 00 – 4 00 p m (classroom A) NEW CLASS! HEALTHY GOURMET COOKING FOOD FOR THE MENOPAUSE AND BEYOND by: Jacqueline H. Alleje. Learn about menopause, its symptoms, treatments and how food can influence your wellbeing during this period of transition. This class teaches you how to eat before and during the menopause and why these recipes are healthy for the whole family The class and recipe booklet are packed with delicious recipes for breakfast, snacks, lunch, dinners and desserts Also available recipe booklet w/ additional recipes & valuable information on menopause (P340.00). P1,600

April 30(Monday)9 30 a m. – 4 00 p m (classroom A) FIESTA BONANZA by: Chef Sam de Leoz. Take out those pots and pans and get ready to prepare Fiesta dishes with a twist and celebrate with your guests your Fiesta Bonanza Recipes: Pansit Malabon, Prawn Thermidor w Sauce Nantua, Relyenong Bangus w/ Sauce Andalouse, Pastel de Lengua, Callos Madrilena and Aligue ng Talangka Paella w/ Crispy Crablets Demonstration w/ student participation. P1,850

April 30(Monday)9 30 a m – 12 30 p m (classroom B) NEW CLASS! OPEN A BED & BREAKFAST-ALL DAY DINING I (Featuring Quick Breads & Coffee) by: Chef Vicki Villanueva * Cinnamon Rolls w Cream Cheese topping, Banana Nut Bread, Blueberry Muffins, Popovers, Chicken Pot Pie w Biscuit, Hot Chocolate, Coffee Latte, Cappuccino and Espresso P2,000

April 30(Monday)1 30 – 5 00 p m (classroom B) NEW CLASS! OPEN A BED & BREAKFAST-ALL DAY DINING II (Featuring Pancake, Waffle, Crepe & Quiche) by: Chef Vicki Villanueva * Chocolate Chip Pancakes, Crepes w/ 3 Mushroom Cream Sauce, French Toast w/ Marmalade, The Best Waffle, Crepe Suzette & Quiche Florentine P2,000

TUITION FEE includes ingredients.
Reservation is required.
WEDDING & BIRTHDAY CAKE orders by appointment only. We sell Cake Decorating, Confectionery and Baking Supplies.

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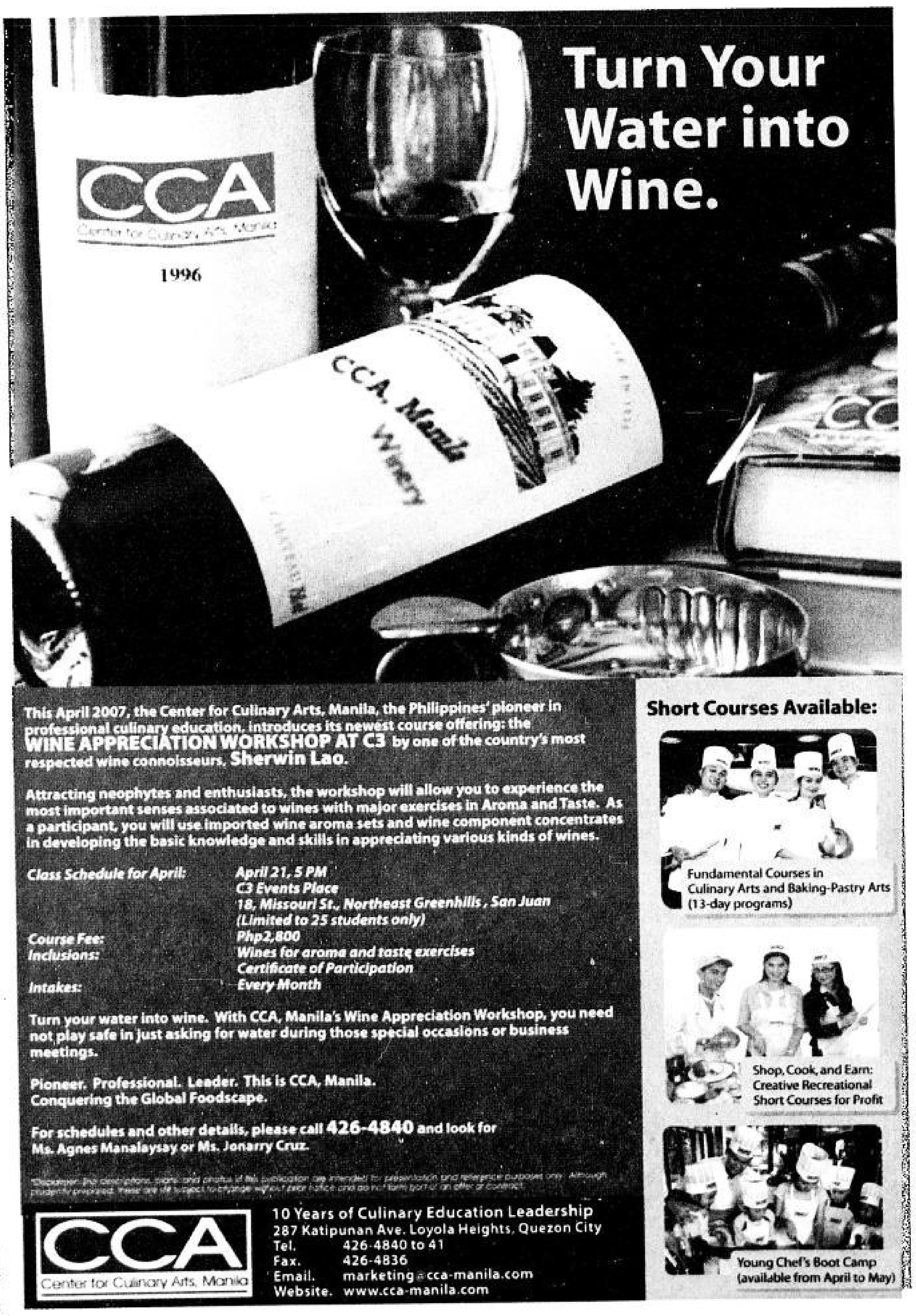

This April 2007, the Center for Culinary Arts, Manila, the Philippines' pioneer in professional culinary education, introduces its newest course offering: the **WINE APPRECIATION WORKSHOP AT C3** by one of the country's most respected wine connoisseurs, **Sherwin Lao.**

Attracting neophytes and enthusiasts, the workshop will allow you to experience the most important senses associated to wines with major exercises in Aroma and Taste. As a participant, you will use imported wine aroma sets and wine component concentrates in developing the basic knowledge and skills in appreciating various kinds of wines.

Class Schedule for April: *April 21, 5 PM*
C3 Events Place
18, Missouri St., Northeast Greenhills, San Juan
(Limited to 25 students only)
Course Fee: *Php2,800*
Inclusions: *Wines for aroma and taste exercises*
Certificate of Participation
Intakes: *Every Month*

Turn your water into wine. With CCA, Manila's Wine Appreciation Workshop, you need not play safe in just asking for water during those special occasions or business meetings.

Pioneer. Professional. Leader. This is CCA, Manila.
Conquering the Global Foodscape.

For schedules and other details, please call **426-4840** and look for Ms. Agnes Manalaysay or Ms. Jonarry Cruz.

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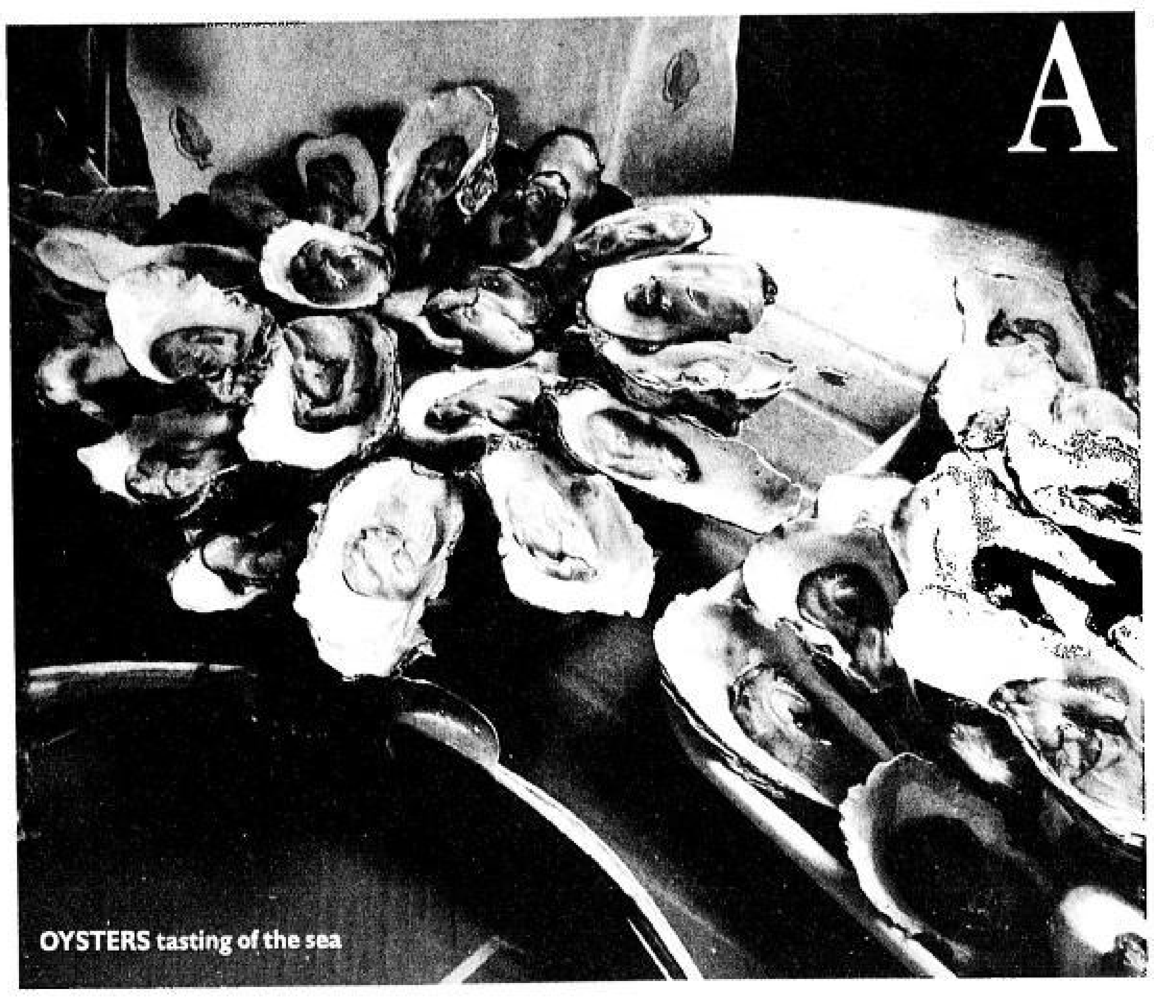
Young Chef's Boot Camp (available from April to May)

LIFESTYLE

IN THIS ISSUE
Bananarama /D2

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
Website: www.inquirer.net/lifestyle
Text us your feedback:
inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)


OYSTERS tasting of the sea

A kitchen destination

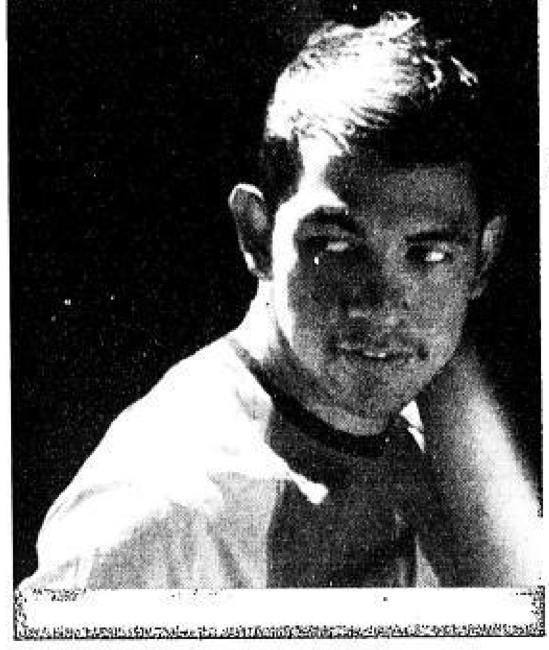
COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Fenix

IF I WERE TO CONDUCT a food tour, I would certainly take my group to Roxas City, in particular to Sonnie Altavas' country kitchen.

There are no doors in her kitchen and the windows have no shutters. Air circulates efficiently, a quality that all kitchens should have. Countertops are of white tiles. What sits on top are some of the pickles from the produce of the land—the root of a kind of taro (*takway*), coconut pith (*ubod*) and banana heart (*puso ng saging*). And there are big glass jars as well that hold eggs in brine that in time will become salted and fish also in brine for the region's favorite *buro*.

A KITCHEN/ D4

WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS



Spot pure energy at the *Relevance* album promo tour.

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www.robinsonsmalls.com

Do you have a hard-to-feed child?

PediaSure Circle of SURE MOMS

PediaSure mom Christine Jacob-Sandejas with daughter Gabby

Join the search for the PediaSure Circle of Sure Moms!

PROMO MECHANICS:

1. Promo is open to all mothers with children aged 1 to 10 years old.
2. To join, mothers are required to:
   - Write a first-hand account of how she deals with her hard-to-feed child/children and how PediaSure helped in making her child/children healthier (maximum of two pages double-spaced).
   - Attach a copy of her picture with her hard-to-feed child/children.
   - Enclose an Official Receipt from any store, as proof of purchase of at least 1 PediaSure product.
   - 1 Story + 1 Picture +1 Official Receipt = 1 Entry
3. All entries must be sent either by regular mail to: "PEDIASURE CIRCLE OF SURE MOMS" c/o PND Marketing Department, Abbott Laboratories, 102 EDSA corner Madison St., Mandaluyong City or via e-mail to: pediasuremoms.ph@abbott.com.
4. Five winning entries will be chosen based on the following criteria:
   - Impact of PediaSure on the children (i.e. in terms of improvement in height & weight) = 50%
   - Creativity, style and manner of the moms' writing =50%
5. Each winner will receive Fifty Thousand Pesos (Php 50,000) as a cash prize. Plus their stories and pictures will be featured in leading magazines and/or newspapers as part of the "Hard-to- Feed Files" (1 print ad release per winner). All cash prizes are tax-free and non-transferable.
6. Promo period starts on March 15, 2007 and ends on April 30, 2007. The deadline of entries is on April 30, 2007 at 12:00 midnight.
7. The entries chosen will undergo a verification process before they are proclaimed as winners. Letters of notification will be sent to the winners by the 2nd week of May. The letters will indicate when, where and how the winners can claim their prizes. Winners must bring the notification letter and any official I.D.
8. Winners must claim their prizes within 60 days from the date of receipt of the notification letter. Prizes not claimed within 60 days from the date of receipt of the notification letter will be forfeited, with prior approval from a BFAD official in favor of Abbott Corporation. The winners declared by BFAD, Abbott Corporation and its representatives are final.
9. Winners will be announced in leading newspapers.
10. Employees of Abbott Corporation and its sister companies, distributors, agencies and the employees' relatives, up to the 2nd degree of affinity and consanguinity, are disqualified from joining the promo.

Tell us your inspiring story about how you handle your hard-to-feed child and get a chance to win P50,000! Plus, you and your child will be featured in our next print advertisement.

PediaSure NUTRI 911 HEALTH ASSESSMENT

If your child is hard to feed, growth may be at risk. Find out if your child's height and weight are on track.

Text <Pediasure><child's name><birthdate><height><weight>

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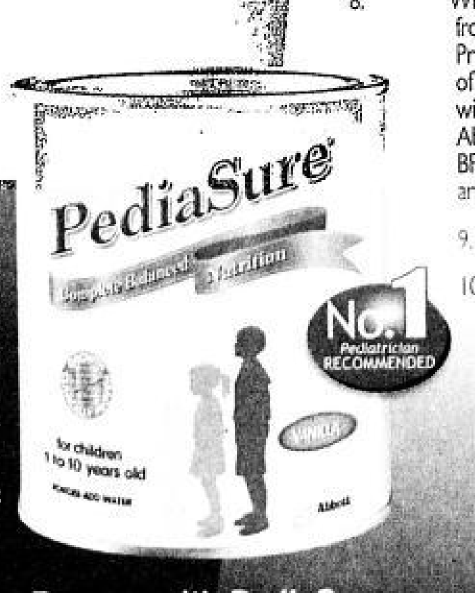
Or call our nutritionists for free advice: Monday to Friday - 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Metro Manila - 6890-545 / Provincial Areas - 1-800-10888-3937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Complete Balanced Nutrition
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for children 1 to 10 years old
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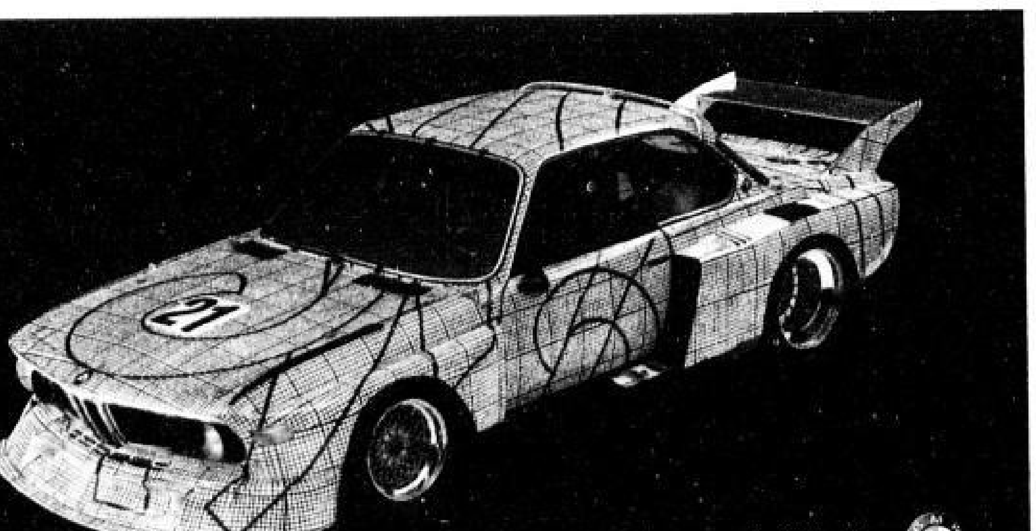
Be sure with PediaSure

Breastmilk is the best for babies up to 2 years.

Per DOH-BFAD Permit No. 0353 s. 2007

70 Abbott A Promise for Life

F. STELLA



Some works of art are truly moving.

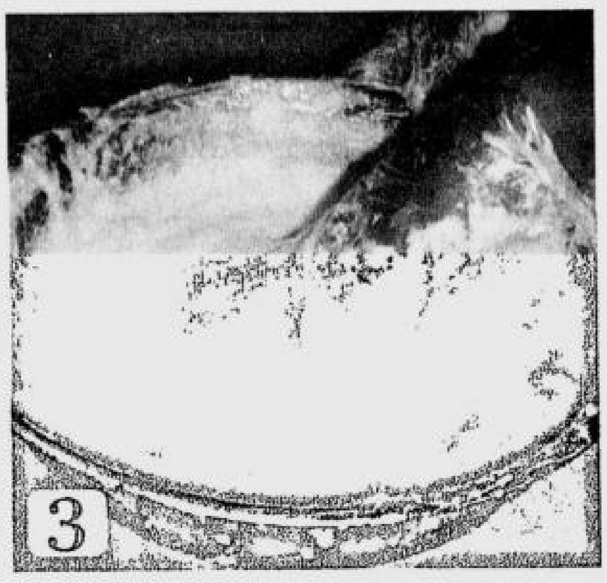
BMW Art Cars on tour / 03.06.07-03.31.07 / AYALA MUSEUM, MAKATI CITY, PHILIPPINES

BMW Art Car by Frank Stella

Initiated by

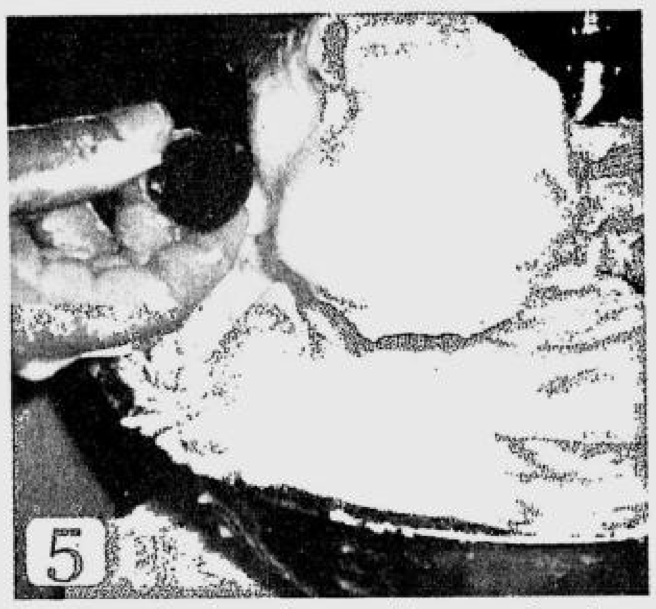
PUT egg whites in a clean, grease-free bowl and beat until frothy.

GRADUALLY whisk in flour. Beat again.

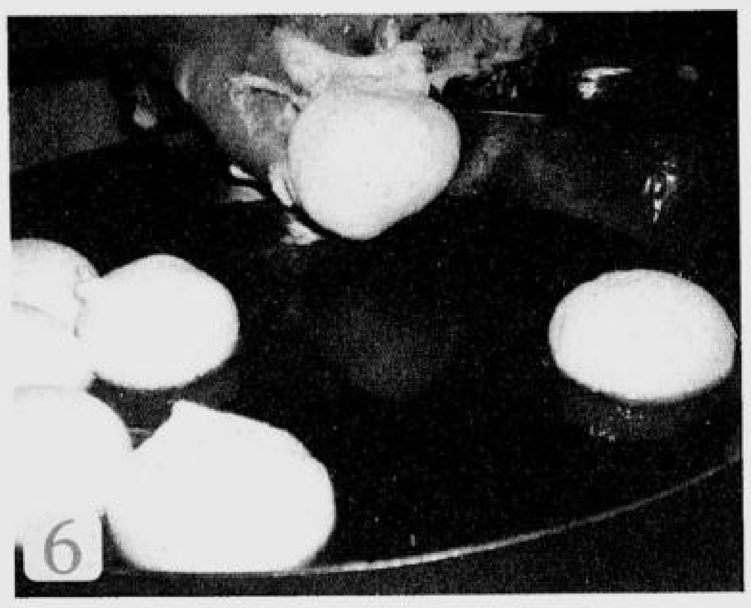


ADD wheat flour. Beat again until the mixture turns into a soft, glossy meringue.

TO PREPARE the filling, top sliced banana with red bean paste. Then, heat oil in frying pan.



USING your hands, coat banana with a scoop of meringue and form into a snowball.



CAREFULLY drop balls into pan. Fry until light brown, stirring constantly.

Go bananas over a simple snack

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Rudy Esperas

STEP BY STEP

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING different for snack that you can easily do at home? Here is a quick, simple *merienda* that you can do almost with your eyes closed.

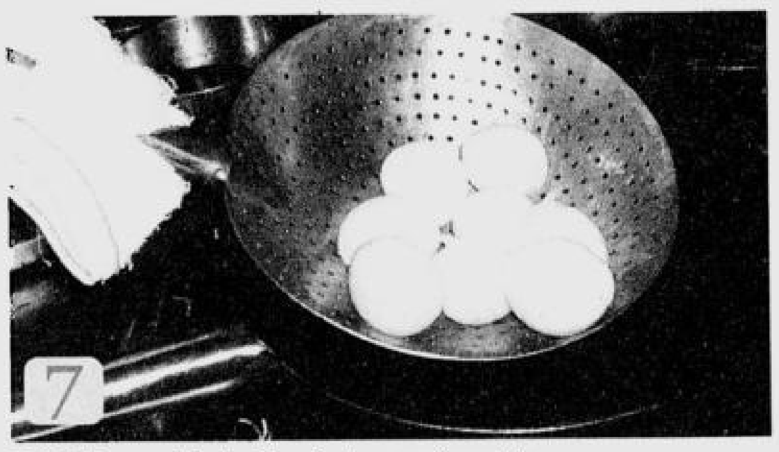
This filling and budget-friendly snack may go well with a good cup of coffee or tea, or even ice-cold soda.

The Deep-fried Soufflé Balls with Banana and Red Bean Paste is one of the popular desserts of Peking Garden (2/L, Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati City, tel. 8179066).

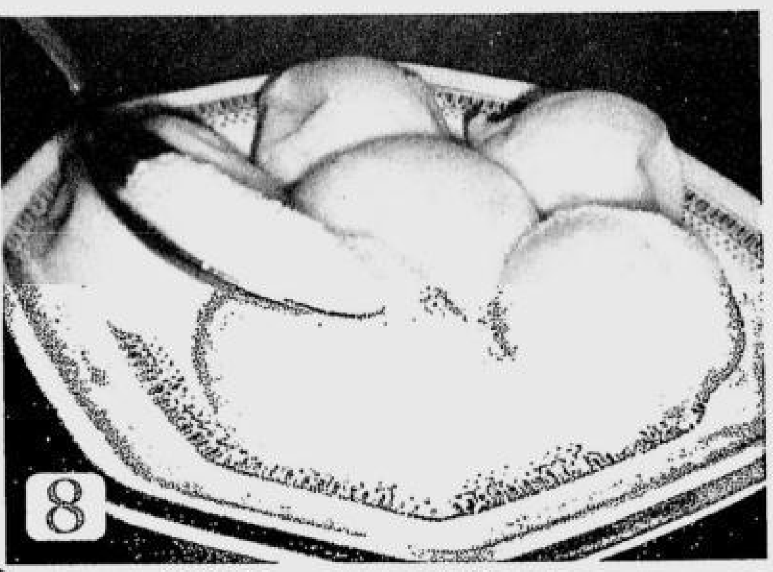
The sugary, golden-colored soft balls have a sweet, fruity filling. Banana and red bean paste are encased in a puffy meringue of egg white then fried. The balls are served sprinkled with white sugar.

Chinese chef Danny Ho says the first step in making the soufflé balls is to mix whisked egg white and flour. The banana filling is coated with this meringue mixture and snowballs are formed then deep-fried. The balls are cooked over a frying pan with medium heat and then low heat.

As you bring the deep-fried soufflé ball out of the frying pan, quickly dust the top with sugar. Set on a serving plate and serve instantly.



SCOOP up and drain. Transfer to a serving plate.



DRIZZLE with white sugar.

DEEP-FRIED Soufflé Balls with red bean paste and banana

The balls are so easy to make but truly satisfying and delicious.

The red bean is available in most supermarkets and Chinese food shops. To prepare the paste, put the red beans and water into a bowl. Bring to a boil, leave to cook over a low heat for an hour, or until the red beans turn soft, and all water has been absorbed. Remove from the heat and leave to cool, then crush into paste.

Ingredients

40 g plain flour, sifted
300 g wheat flour, sifted
10 pc whole egg
Sugar for dusting
For the filling:
Red bean paste
6 pc banana *lakatan*, peeled and cut into 1-cm thick rounds

For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

CHINA'S TOP TELEVISION CULINARY SHOW FEATURES RP DELICACIES
The Department of Tourism's Project Kulinarya is the main feature this month in China's top television culinary show "Eating with Mr. Na," hosted by China's renowned TV personality Na Wei (6th from left). A film crew was in the country for an eight-day food trip. Among the places they visited were Via Mare, Tagaytay's Sonya's Garden, Taal's Casa Cecilia and Tayabas' Kamayan sa Palaisdaan. Also in photo are Ryan Sebastian of DOT Project Kulinarya; Delia Rosales, operations manager of Via Mare Group; and Gigi Liwanag, Team China member.

THE CONSUMER

March is the month for women and consumers

By Linda B. Bolido

SURPRISINGLY, FOR AN EVENT that concerns almost the whole Philippine population, World Consumer Rights Day on March 15 passed almost unnoticed.

This is probably why several years after the country passed the Consumer Act of the Philippines, many Filipinos are still unaware of their rights.

The law and related statutes and ordinances on environment and development seek to protect consumers' rights and establish standards of conduct for business and industry.

Among others, consumers have the right to get the facts to be able to make informed choices, to select from a range of goods and services, and to be protected against hazards to health or life.

But those rights are useless if consumers do not know about them or, worse, choose not to exercise them. They have to assert their rights and be constantly vigilant.

March is also women's month, and women—as wives and mothers—often have to make the critical consumer decisions that can advance or hinder the cause of sustainable development, environmental protection, and health protection and promotion.

GAIA/EcoWaste Coalition's Task Force on Plastics has come up with suggestions on how women, particularly mothers, can exercise their consumer rights and make choices that will ensure the health and safety of both their families and the environment.

Here are practical steps that women may take:

1. Reduce consumption. Resources are limited. As consumers, women should ask themselves whether they need something or simply want it.

2. Read the labels. Get information on the ingredients or substances used. Read product warnings carefully. Check expiration date, efficiency, durability, etc.

3. Be cautious. Be wary of products with cocktails of unknown and unsafe chemicals. Even some cosmetic and hygienic products contain hazardous chemicals.

4. Do research. This will lessen the risk of being exposed to unwanted chemicals/hazardous substances.

5. Eat fresh. Consume less canned, processed food. Aside from preservatives, some products may contain controversial chemicals. Avoid eating meat-centered meals as much as you can.

6. Patronize products that are repairable, reusable and recyclable.

7. Reuse that bag! Bring your reusable bags when shopping or have groceries placed in a box instead of plastic bags.

Not 'mameng'

Reader Violeta P. Hughes wrote to express her concern that the endangered fish *mameng*, which some restaurants had already banished from their menus, might be sold in supermarkets.

"In Rustan's Greenbelt 1, I saw several packages of fish labeled only as 'fish fillet.' When I asked the clerk what the fish was, she said she didn't know.

"Later, I was buying some frozen fish in Robinsons Malate and again I saw the innocent-looking label 'fish fillet.' This time, the clerk whom I asked readily answered *mameng* when I asked what fish it was. When I expressed surprise... she immediately backed off and said she wasn't sure because the supplier wasn't sure about the fish's identity either."

We passed on Hughes' concern to the establishments she mentioned and got the following replies:

From Edgar Fernandez, Fresh division manager, Rustan's and Shopwise:

"Rustan's and Shopwise don't sell *mameng* fish. The *maya-maya* fish, when it is big, bears an uncanny resemblance to the *mameng* fish. As a matter of company policy, we do not carry endangered species."

From Jody Gadia of Robinsons Supermarket chain (RSC):

"RSC does not sell *mameng*. This is an endangered species and we are fully aware of this. What we sell as fish fillet is parrot fish."

We hope these answers reassure Hughes.

Low-fat party

IF YOUR FRIENDS ARE calorie-conscious, why not throw a "Fit and Fab" party with these special recipes from Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog?

The only low fat hotdog in the market today, Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog is 96 percent fat-free.

Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog Chicken Carbonara with Spinach and Basil

Ingredients:

250 g linguine noodles
1 tbsp Magnolia Gold Lite
4-5 cloves garlic, minced
1 pc medium-sized onion, minced
6 pc Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog, sliced into ½-in length
1 small can button mushrooms, sliced
2 c Magnolia Low Fat Milk
1 pc hotdog bun, cut into cubes
20 pc spinach leaves, cut into strips (chiffonade)
8 pc basil leaves, cut into strips (chiffonade)
Italian seasoning
salt
pepper
parmesan cheese, shaved

Procedure:

Prepare pasta according to package directions. Melt Magnolia Gold Lite in a pan. Sauté garlic and onion. Add Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog and mushrooms and cook over medium heat until tender. Add the hotdog bun until golden brown. Stir in milk and let it simmer for 2-3 minutes. Add the spinach and basil leaves for 1-2 minutes until leaves begin to wilt. Sprinkle Italian seasoning and add salt and pepper to taste. Pour the mixture on the cooked pasta and add parmesan. Serve hot. Makes five servings.

***Calorie per serving:** 230 cal.
***Serving size:** about ½ cup

MAGNOLIA Low Fat Chickendog Fritata

Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog Fritata

Ingredients:

1 tsp olive oil
1 pc medium-sized white onion, chopped
200 g Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog, sliced into ½-in length
1 pc medium-sized carrot, cubed and boiled
1 pc potato, cubed and boiled
1 pc small-sized green pepper, cut in squares
50 g cooked peas
4 pc egg whites, scrambled
2 pc whole eggs, scrambled
½ tbsp salt
¼ tsp fine black pepper

Procedure:

Sauté onions in olive oil. Add sliced Magnolia Low Fat Chicken Hotdog, carrots, potatoes and green pepper. Sauté until cooked. Add the peas and continue cooking. Pour in the scrambled eggs evenly to coat the mixture so that it will come out like a cake. Cook through. Slice into wedges. Serve hot. Makes three servings.

***Serving size:** about 1/3 cup
***Calories per serving:** 240 cal

MAGNOLIA Low Fat Chickendog Chicken Carbonara with Spinach and Basil

OLD Swiss Inn guarantees stress-free preparations for home parties, meetings and receptions.

OLD Swiss Inn's growing catering business is a mixture of great food and elegant design.

A party of Swiss delights

THE OLD SWISS INN OFFERS local diners not just authentic Swiss dishes but other products that have made Switzerland famous like chocolate and cheese.

People can have raclette dinners, fondues and trademark desserts whipped up with Swiss chocolate Toblerone, like Cheesecake, Crinkles and Treasures for their own family and office parties and events.

Through the Old Swiss Inn's catering service, these, as well as other favorites like the Pepper Steak Corned Beef Brisket, Gnagi and turkey, Angus prime rib and rack of lamb roast can now be served during special occasions.

The Old Swiss Inn can customize its catering service according to a desired theme, collaborating with clients on the menu, decorations, service and entertainment. It can host a variety of occasions, from a simple business lunch to live-in seminars.

Old Swiss Inn is at The Garden Plaza Hotel and Suites, 1030 Belen St., Paco, Manila (tel. 5213002, 5262739, 5224835 loc 115); G/F Somerset Olympia, Makati Avenue cor. Sto Tomas St., Makati City (8188251, 8180098, 8121010 loc 511 to 512); and 2/F BMW Autozentrum Lounge, Commerce Avenue cor. Madrigal Avenue, Ayala Alabang (8092326).

The place for the business class

CHATEAU 1771, THE restaurant with the French-inspired architecture, has become a favorite retreat for business executives from the towering steel and chrome edifices of the Ortigas Center.

Clients do not just go to the restaurant for meals but also hold business meetings, corporate presentations and even mini-conferences there.

Banco de Oro's assistant vice president Carla C. Papa says she has business meetings at Chateau because it is quiet and near her office.

Noel Cuyno, general manager of All Tech Biotechnology Corp., says the restaurant's good food and superb service help create successful meetings.

Jesus Guevarra II, executive vice president of the Development Bank of the Philippines, says the food at Chateau 1771 is cooked gourmet style and priced reasonably.

Equitable PCI Bank vice president Leticia Tan-Chua says the bank's foreign guests have been impressed, proving that the restaurant's menu has an international appeal, catering to both Asian and European tastes.

Vicente de Villa III, director at the Central Bank of the Philippines, appreciates the special attention given to him at the restaurant.

Michael G. Wells, vice president of Astec Power, says the staff always greets him by name that he feels he is among friends when he is at the restaurant.

Chateau 1771 has built a reputation for "No Borders" cuisine prepared in the time-honored French way of cooking.

Service at Chateau 1771 is characterized by a careful attention to even the minutest detail, which clients appreciate.

Chateau 1771 is open 7 a.m.-11 p.m., Monday-Thursday; and 7 a.m.-1 a.m., Friday-Saturday. On Sundays, the restaurant is reserved for exclusive functions and special occasions.

Chateau 1771 (reservations, 6317340 to 41; banquet services, 6317339) is at El Pueblo Real de Manila, ADB cor. Julia Vargas Avenues, Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

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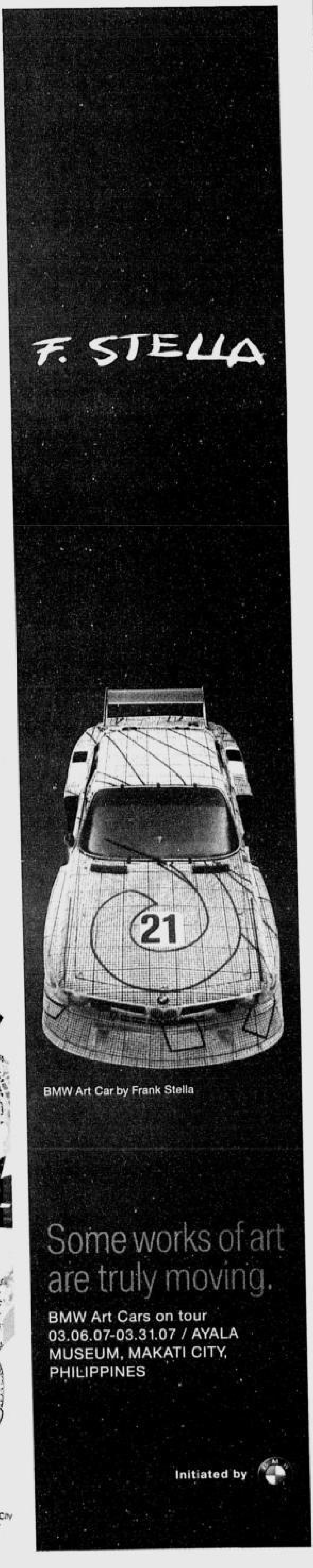
KCC Mall, General Santos City • Southway Mall, [illegible] • SM [illegible] • SM City Clark, Pampanga • SM [illegible]



BMW Art Car by Frank Stella
Some works of art are truly moving.
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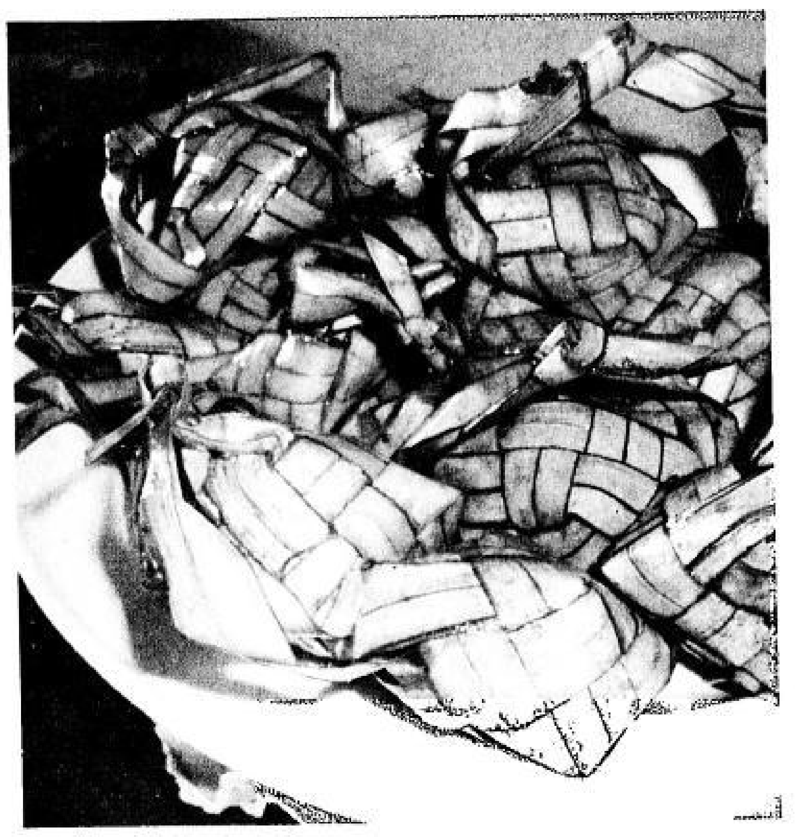
Initiated by

THE airy, spacious country kitchen of Sonnie Altavas with its wood-fire bricks ovens


PUSO cooked in nipa tuba

A kitchen destination

From page D1

> The best appetizer is seeing what you are about to have, like skewered native chicken and oysters gleaming in their shells

Rustic

Bricks in muted red color dominate the kitchen, accentuating the rustic ambience. The bricks hold in the heat of the oven and the stoves, both fed by wood. The cooks know just when to reduce the fire to embers for that important phase of slow-cooking as well as when to add some more fuel for that quick sauté. And, Sonnie says, they do prefer cooking with wood because food cooks faster.

Still, there are modern equipment in the place. A blender, a coffee maker—a country kitchen can keep up with the times, too.

All around you see touches of Sonnie's interior design. At one wall, several huge cooking pans (*dalwasi, talyasi*) are hung, all showing signs of being seasoned from cooking for big feasts. On another wall are wooden spoons and forks and, in a far corner, another set of local cookware are hung.

We arrived at midmorning from Iloilo, early enough to have the breakfast Sonnie prepared and to see our lunch being cooked.

The best appetizer is seeing what you are about to have. Several native chicken still skewered on spits were resting after being roasted in the oven. Oysters were gleaming in their shells and it was tempting to take one right away, taste the sea in one gulp. But our host said we should have some *suman* first.

The *suman* was called *tando-tando*. Sonnie said it looked like *tumba-tumba*, a caterpillar's puppa. It was *suman* that tastes like *tamales* but only that white portion of pure rice flour. We were offered thick chocolate and Sonnie said the best ones came from Miag-ao and Cabatuan in Iloilo.

Gazebo dining

Our dining room for all our eating was going to be a gazebo right across the kitchen. It had windows all around with window seats. You could inhale the cool air and look out to the fish ponds. If you were sleepy, you could go up to a room where the stairs and the walls are made of bamboo.

To burn off some of the breakfast before the lunch, we surveyed the place. We went to another dining area in the lanai near the main house. One pot outside had *libas*, a leaf used for souring meat added at the last minute only or the meat would not cook. On the sides of the fishponds, there were *palaypay* leaves that were later to be cooked with coconut milk (*gata*) and some dried shrimps (*hibe*). On the grill were packets of banana leaves holding some calf brain. This way of cooking is called *tinum-anan*, grilling in packets that will allow the ingredient to cook in its own steam, whether calf brain, chicken soup or fish *paksiw*.

Back in the kitchen, more dishes were being prepared. There was *bagongon*, black long shells, that were being washed and would later be cooked in coconut milk and ginger. *Takway* and *puso ng saging* were going to be part of the *laswa*, vegetables cooked in water flavored with shrimp head juice. *Pagi* (sting ray) was cooking as *linabong*, also with coconut milk and ginger.

On a *kawali* were two ducks simmering in a juice that Sonnie said was *tuba sa nipa* or the toddy expressed from nipa palm. Used early enough before the toddy ferments into vinegar or even made into the local vodka (*lambanog*), the toddy is syrupy sweet. It was used to cook a soup of glutinous rice called *basa-basa*. And rice cooked in coconut leaves shaped like heart called *pusô*. A separate container for the *tuba sa nipa* was nearby in case the diner wanted more of that sweetness.

These dishes were our lunch and dinner, more than enough to feed 20 people.

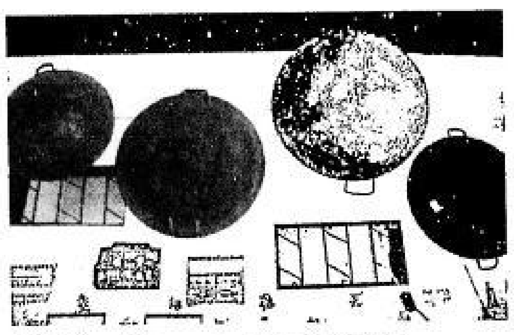
Next day, we woke up early to catch the fish market where we looked for a specialty that seemed to be getting rare. It's *sinalay*, smoked big shrimps skewered in barbecue sticks. Alas, we couldn't find any, every vendor saying that there had been some earlier or that it wasn't done anymore. We consoled ourselves with buying small shrimps, alive and jumping. These would go straight to the kitchen, sprinkled with flour then deep-fried. That was our breakfast, well, just a part of it, as you can imagine, given how much food we had the day before.

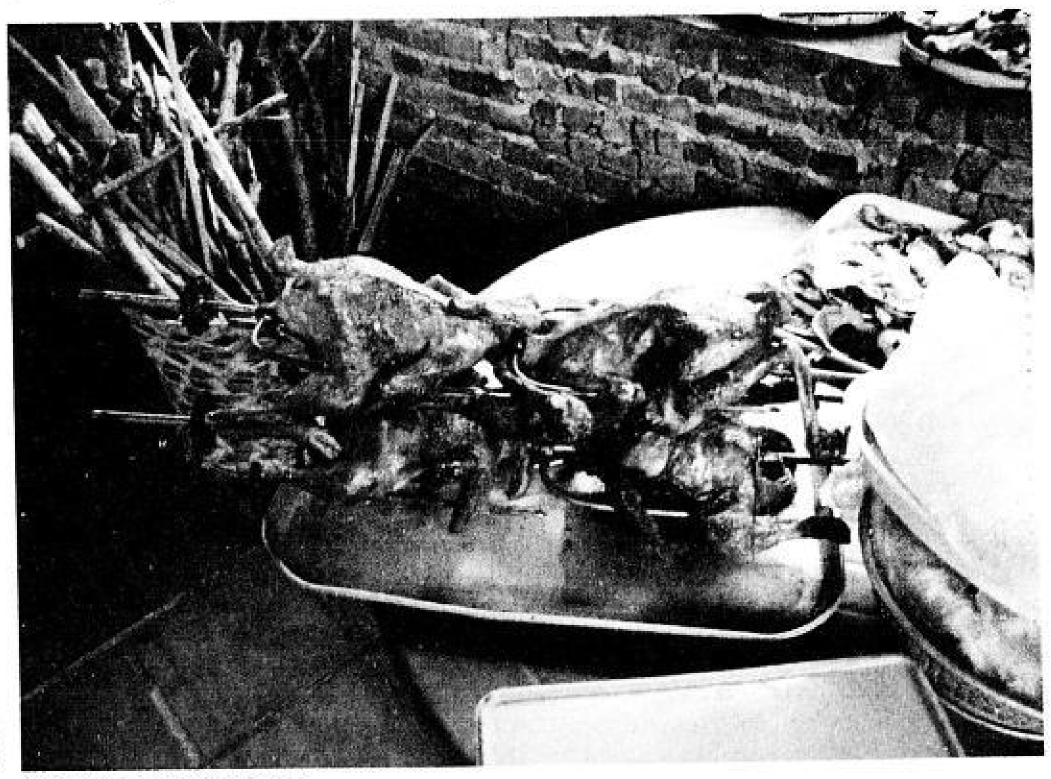
My second visit to Roxas City would add to the food memories I have of this place. My favorite dish during the first visit was a bowl of unhatched chicken eggs swimming in broth. That kept me busy the whole lunch trying to calculate how many mother hens it took to make that dish.

But make no mistake, there is much more to be had in the place. Roxas City, after all, is the seafood capital of the country.

Email the author at pinoyfood04 @yahoo.com

BASA-BASA is rice cooked with tuba sa nipa.


HUGE cooking vats adorn the walls.


NATIVE chicken barbecue

Trendy Filipino food ideas

THE PHILIPPINES IS BEGINNING to build a reputation for new and innovative food products with distinctive packaging designs and responding to the different lifestyles of today's consumers.

Filipino manufacturers have invested time and money in developing new food ideas and improving the quality of existing food products to be more competitive in the world market.

One example of trendy Filipino food is the easy-to-prepare Antonio Pueo Incorporada's Double Chocolate Oatmeal that tastes like the rich *champorado* (chocolate rice porridge) but with the health benefits of oatmeal.

F.D. Gonzales' packed lunches use modern packaging technology for greater convenience. People can enjoy the home-cooked taste of Pinangat (taro leaves stuffed with ground pork and shrimp) and Inulukan (taro leaves stuffed with crab meat and shredded coconut meat), among others, anytime, anywhere.

Gemfoods International, Inc. has found a winner in its Muscovado Coated Banana Chips. The old Filipino favorite snack was made healthier with the use of muscovado sugar.

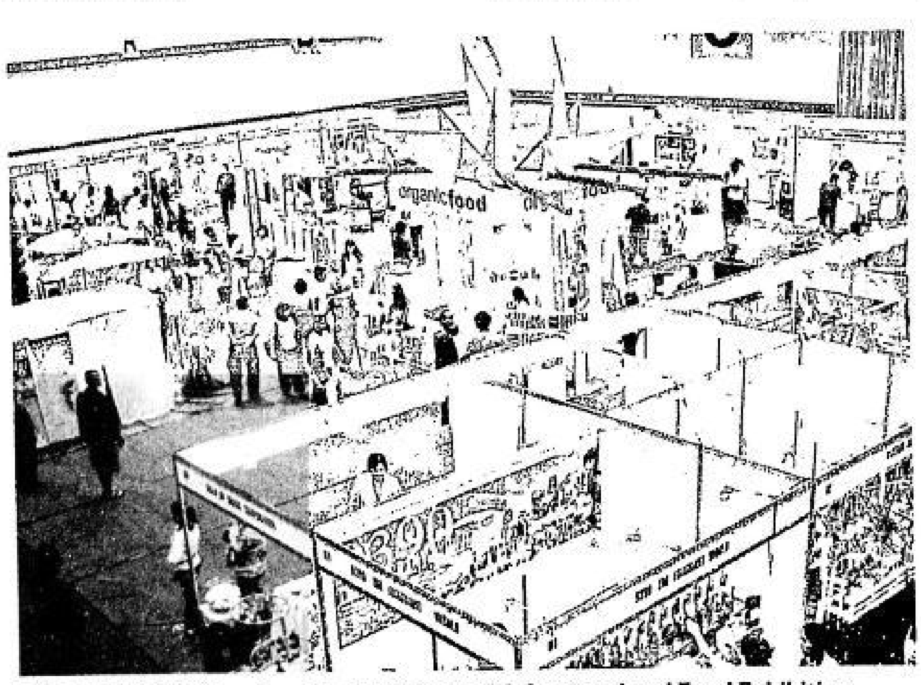
Also innovative is Nutri-Prime Farms' Mangosteen Tea which, as the name implies, uses extracts of real mangosteen fruit for a healthy and refreshing drink.

Sorsogon Food Enterprises' Lola Conching Vinegar is perfect for salad dressing. Made from coconut nectar, making it truly unique, it comes in five variants: Classic, Tarragon, Tarragon and Coco Honey, Raw Wild Honey, and Chili and Ginger.

The food items were among the winners of the Trendy Awards for outstanding Filipino food companies during previous staging of the International Food Exhibition (IFEX) Philippines.

Organized by the Philippine government's export promotions agency, Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), IFEX showcases the best from the Philippine food industry, including fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, packaged food, value-added marine products, specialties such as sauces and seasonings, confectionery, and snack products.

More trendy Filipino food ideas and products will be shown at the IFEX Philippines 2007 May 18-20 at the World Trade Center, Manila. For more information, call CITEM, Agri-Marine Division, at 8311282, 8312201 local 204 and 238; e-mail agrimarine @citem.com.ph, or visit www.ifex-philippines.com.



THOUSANDS of local and foreign buyers visit International Food Exhibition (IFEX) Philippines every year because of the quality food products that it showcases.

IFEX Philippines 2007, now on its fourth year as the government-led trade show for the food industry, aims to provide worldwide exposure of the Philippine food products, with this year's theme: "Filipino Food in a Global Setting."

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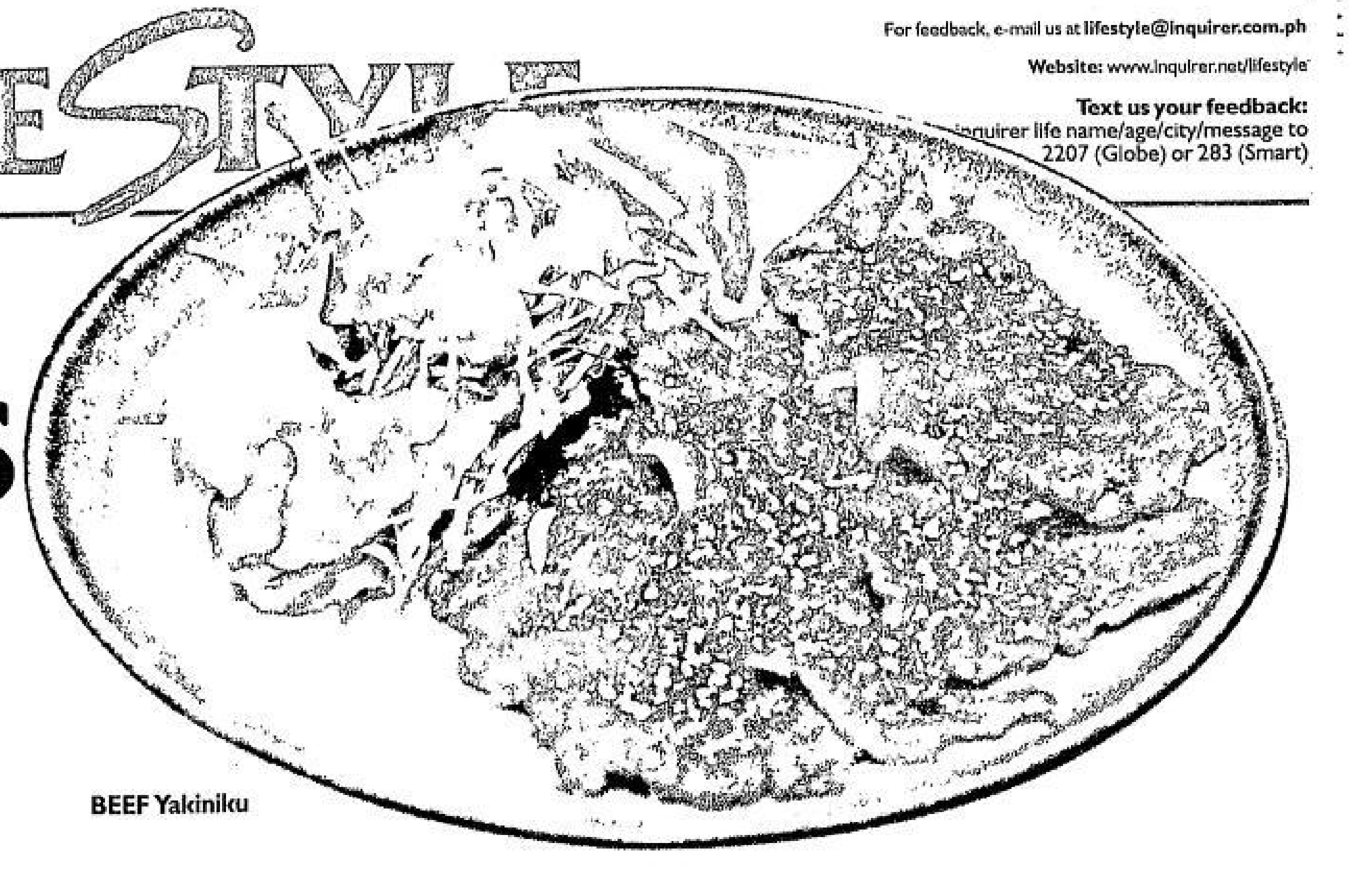
Japan's four seasons in one restaurant

Spring, summer, autumn and winter will be reflected in the new Century Tsukiji's menu



BEEF Yakiniku

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Rodel Rotoni

IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHY another Japanese restaurant named Tsukiji has opened at the Century Park Hotel in Manila, it is because founder Yusuke Katayama wants to make its authentic Japanese dishes, beyond sushi, sashimi and tempura, available to more Filipinos.

Tsukiji restaurant in the Milky Way building on Pasay Road, Makati, has established a loyal clientele with its Japanese cooking that uses the freshest catch of the day prepared the simplest and most natural way. It showcases the very best of traditional Japanese cuisine with contemporary influences.

Now, Katayama has left Tsukiji-Makati in the capable hands of his Filipino partners as he settles in a new restaurant, the Century Tsukiji.

"We found a new home and a new partner," says Katayama. "We will be able to serve more of the delicious food cooked the traditional Japanese way that our customers love. We will also introduce exciting additions to the menu for a broader selection and a deeper experience of Japanese cuisine."

Formidable team

Katayama's wife, Minny, helped set up the new place while a formidable team of Japanese culinary experts—Seiji Kamura, teppanyaki chef; Shinji Furukawa, hot kitchen and tempura chef; and Yamazaki Seiko, sushi chef—supports him in the kitchen.

With the restaurant getting most of its ingredients from Japan, the menu of Century Tsukiji (pronounced skee-jee) reflects the country's four seasons—winter, spring, summer and autumn. Each season is marked by a distinct assortment of culinary delights.

The daily catch, for instance, varies in winter and summer, and different vegetables are harvested in spring and autumn. *Gindara*, for example, is abundant during the cold season while mackerel is bountiful during summer.

Katayama assures Century Tsukiji diners only the finest and freshest ingredients are used in preparing every item on the restaurant's menu. Most of the ingredients are flown daily from Tsukiji, reputedly one of the largest wholesale markets in Tokyo for fresh veggies, fruits, fish and other seafood as well as meats.

With Lucio Tan owning both Century Park Hotel and the Philippine Airlines, daily deliveries from Japan are assured.

Classic, all-season Century Tsukiji (tel. 5288888) must-try offerings are the Gindara Teriyaki, succulent and flaky *gindara* fish topped with a rich, sweet and tangy teriyaki sauce; Kaiso Salad, a concoction of crisp greens and crab fillet; Hotate Kaiyaki, delectable fire-grilled scallops in butter and sake wine; Wagyu Sukiyaki, a hot soup of Ohmi (a brand name derived from a place in Japan) beef and assorted Japanese vegetables; and Wagyu Tataki, tasty Ohmi beef with a savory *tataki* sauce.

Also not to be missed are the Jo Chirashi, a colorful main course with *kinshi tamago* (egg), fresh vegetables, and sushi rice as main ingredients; Shokado Bento, a complete meal

JAPAN'S/ E3

BRIGHTLY colored interior is a perfect backdrop for typical Japanese wood furnishing and accents.

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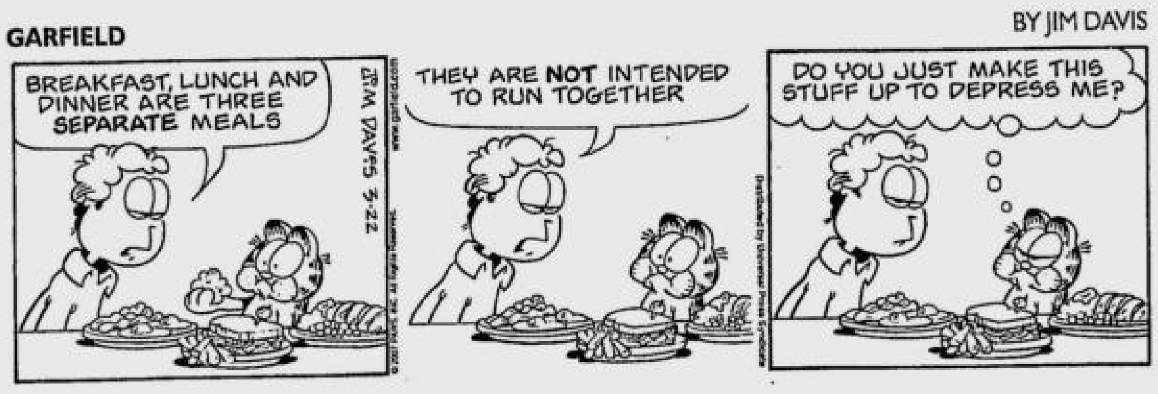
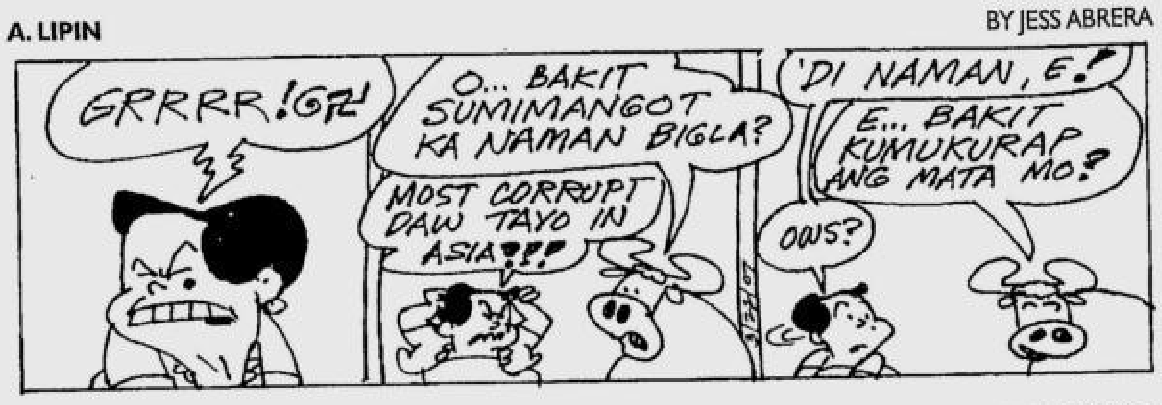
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND DINNER ARE THREE SEPARATE MEALS
JIM DAVIS 3-22
THEY ARE NOT INTENDED TO RUN TOGETHER
DO YOU JUST MAKE THIS STUFF UP TO DEPRESS ME?

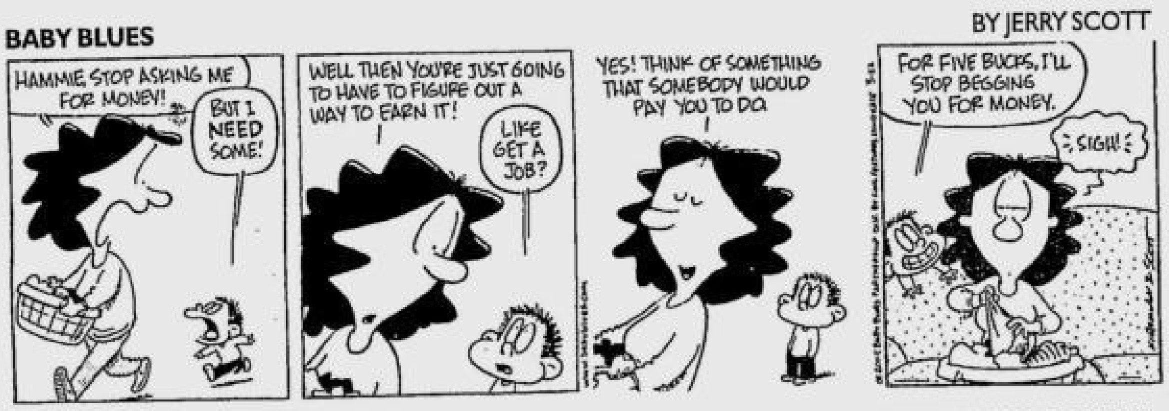
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


GRRRR!GR!
O... BAKIT SUMIMANGOT KA NAMAN BIGLA?
MOST CORRUPT DAW TAYO IN ASIA?!?!
'DI NAMAN, E!
OWS?
E... BAKIT KUMUKURAP ANG MATA MO?

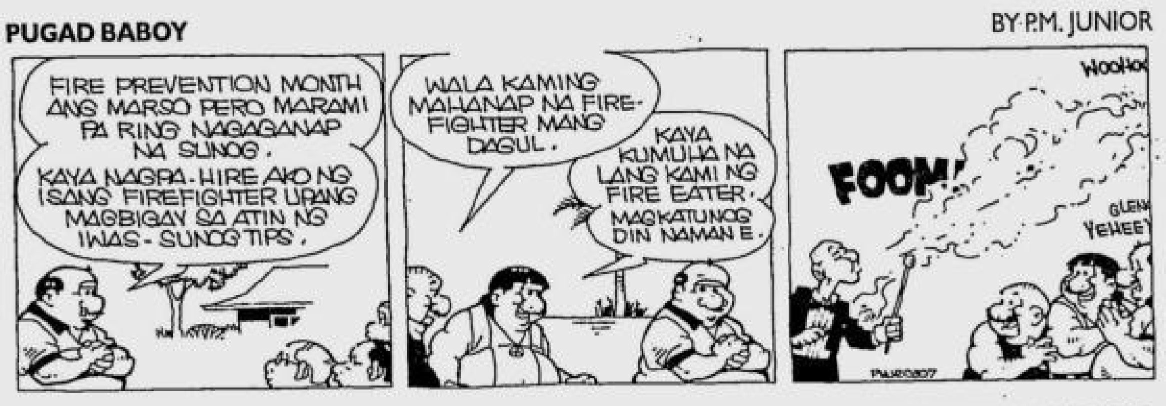
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HAMMIE, STOP ASKING ME FOR MONEY!
BUT I NEED SOME!
WELL THEN YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO EARN IT!
LIKE GET A JOB?
YES! THINK OF SOMETHING THAT SOMEBODY WOULD PAY YOU TO DO.
FOR FIVE BUCKS, I'LL STOP BEGGING YOU FOR MONEY.
SIGH!

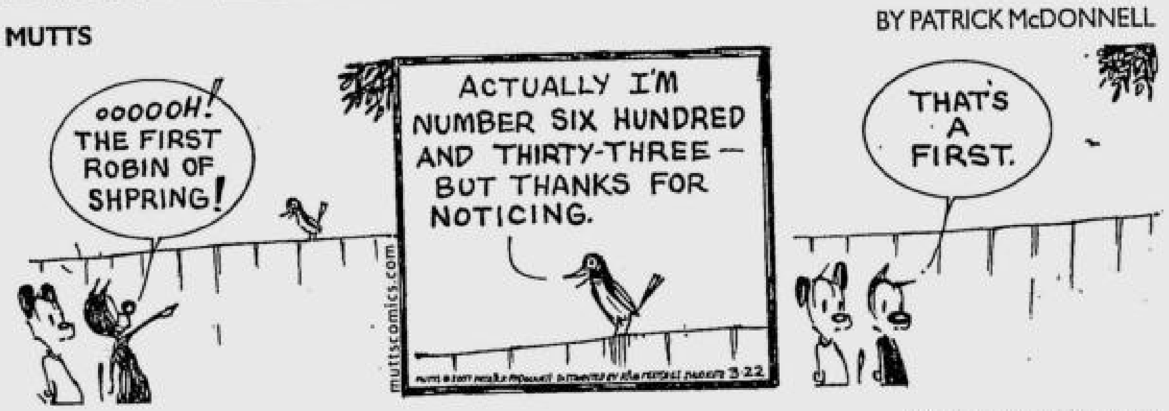
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


FIRE PREVENTION MONTH ANG MARSO PERO MARAMI PA RING NAGAGANAP NA SUNOG.
KAYA NAGPA-HIRE AKO NG ISANG FIREFIGHTER UPANG MAGBIGAY SA ATIN NG IWAS-SUNOG TIPS.
WALA KAMING MAHANAP NA FIRE-FIGHTER MANG DAGUL.
KAYA KUMUHA NA LANG KAMI NG FIRE EATER. MAGKATUNOG DIN NAMAN E.
FOOM!
WOOHOO
GLEN
YEHEEY
PM2007

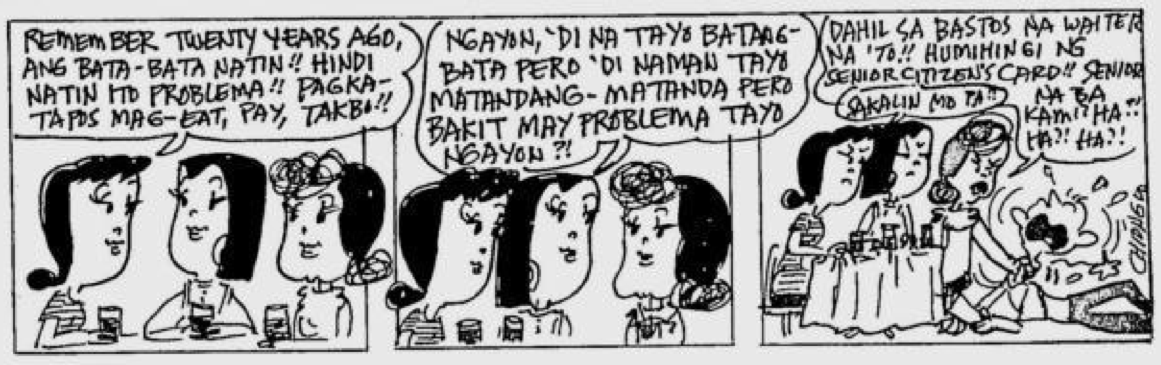
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


OOOOOH! THE FIRST ROBIN OF SHPRING!
ACTUALLY I'M NUMBER SIX HUNDRED AND THIRTY-THREE — BUT THANKS FOR NOTICING.
muttscomics.com
3-22
THAT'S A FIRST.

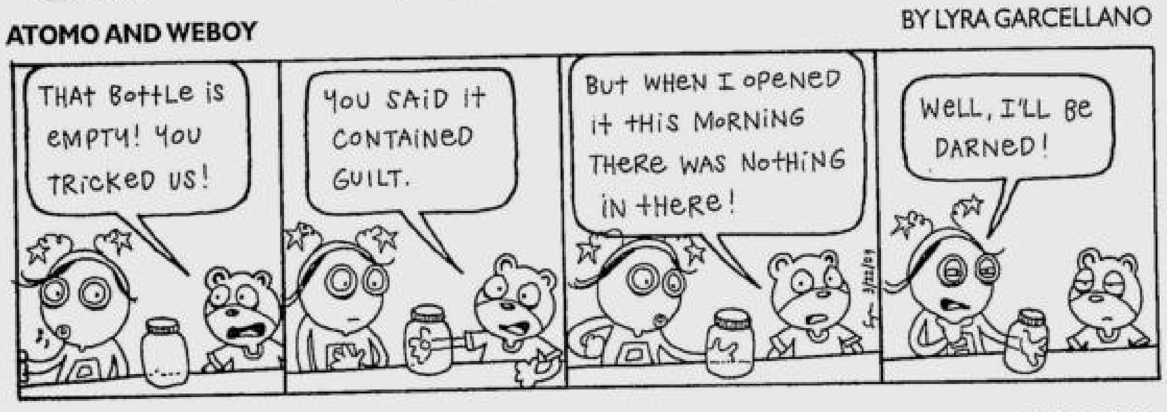
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


REMEMBER TWENTY YEARS AGO, ANG BATA-BATA NATIN!! HINDI NATIN ITO PROBLEMA!! PAGKA-TAPOS MAG-EAT, PAY, TAKBO!!
NGAYON, 'DI NA TAYO BATANG-BATA PERO 'DI NAMAN TAYO MATANDANG-MATANDA PERO BAKIT MAY PROBLEMA TAYO NGAYON?!
DAHIL SA BASTOS NA WAITER NA 'TO!! HUMIHINGI NG SENIOR CITIZEN'S CARD!! SENIOR NA BA KAMI?! HA?! HA?! HA?!
SAKALIN MO TA!!
CHIONGLO

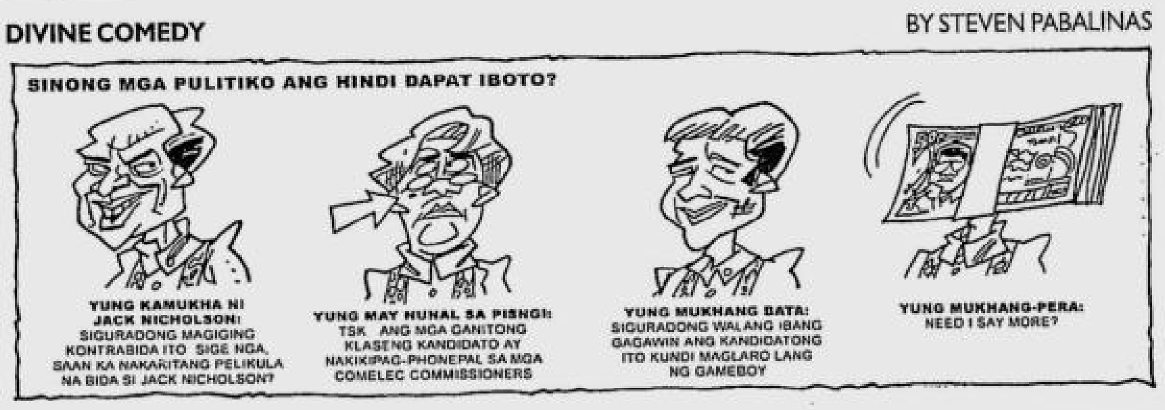
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


THAT BOTTLE IS EMPTY! YOU TRICKED US!
YOU SAID IT CONTAINED GUILT.
BUT WHEN I OPENED IT THIS MORNING THERE WAS NOTHING IN THERE!
WELL, I'LL BE DARNED!

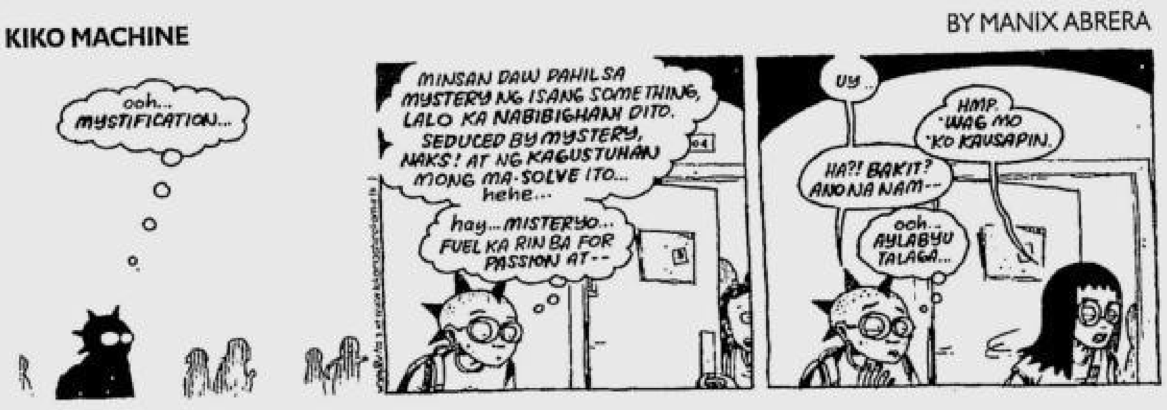
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


SINONG MGA PULITIKO ANG HINDI DAPAT IBOTO?
YUNG KAMUKHA NI JACK NICHOLSON: SIGURADONG MAGIGING KONTRABIDA ITO SIGE NGA, SAAN KA NAKAKITANG PELIKULA NA BIDA SI JACK NICHOLSON?
YUNG MAY NUNAL SA PISNGI: TSK ANG MGA GANITONG KLASENG KANDIDATO AY NAKIKIPAG-PHONEPAL SA MGA COMELEC COMMISSIONERS
YUNG MUKHANG BATA: SIGURADONG WALANG IBANG GAGAWIN ANG KANDIDATONG ITO KUNDI MAGLARO LANG NG GAMEBOY
YUNG MUKHANG-PERA: NEED I SAY MORE?

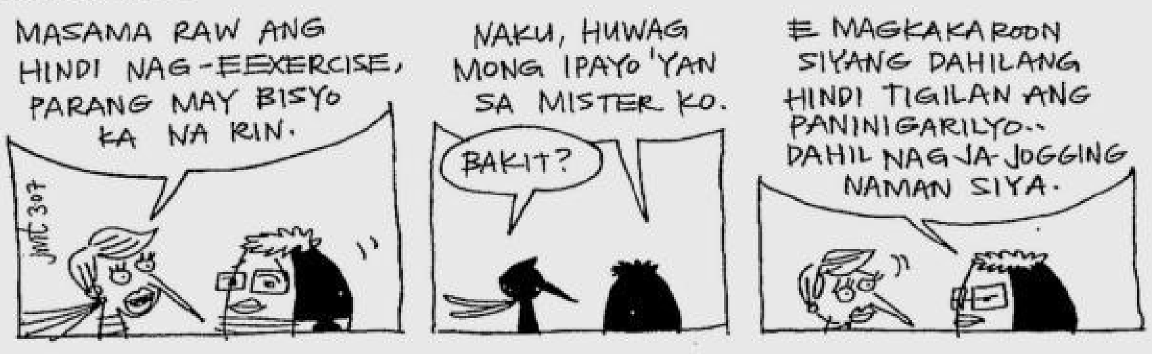
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


ooh... MYSTIFICATION...
MINSAN DAW DAHIL SA MYSTERY NG ISANG SOMETHING, LALO KA NABIBIGHANI DITO. SEDUCED BY MYSTERY, NAKS! AT NG KAGUSTUHAN MONG MA-SOLVE ITO... hehe...
hay... MISTERYO... FUEL KA RIN BA FOR PASSION AT--
UY..
HMP. 'WAG MO 'KO KAUSAPIN.
HA?! BAKIT? ANO NA NAM--
ooh.. AYLABYU TALAGA...

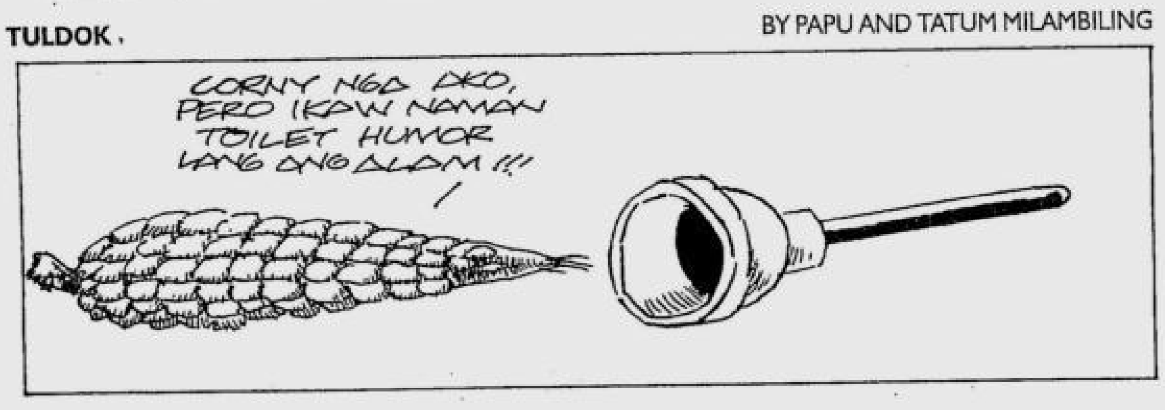
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MASAMA RAW ANG HINDI NAG-EEXERCISE, PARANG MAY BISYO KA NA RIN.
NAKU, HUWAG MONG IPAYO 'YAN SA MISTER KO.
BAKIT?
E MAGKAKAROON SIYANG DAHILANG HINDI TIGILAN ANG PANINIGARILYO.. DAHIL NAGJA-JOGGING NAMAN SIYA.

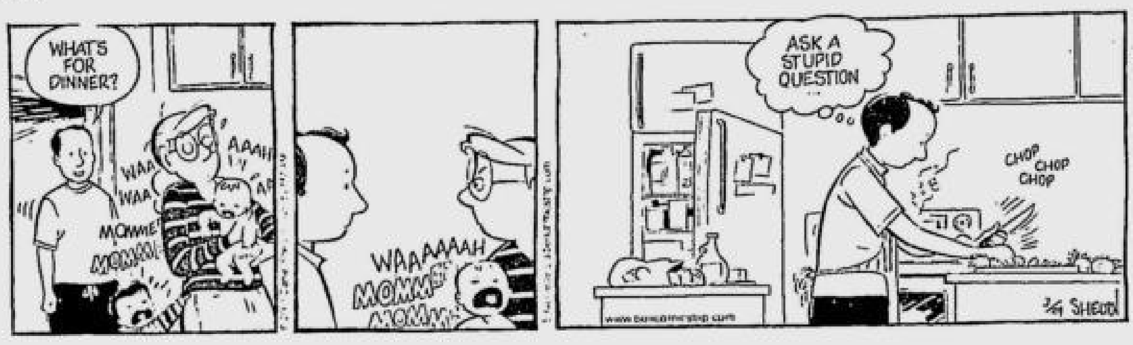
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

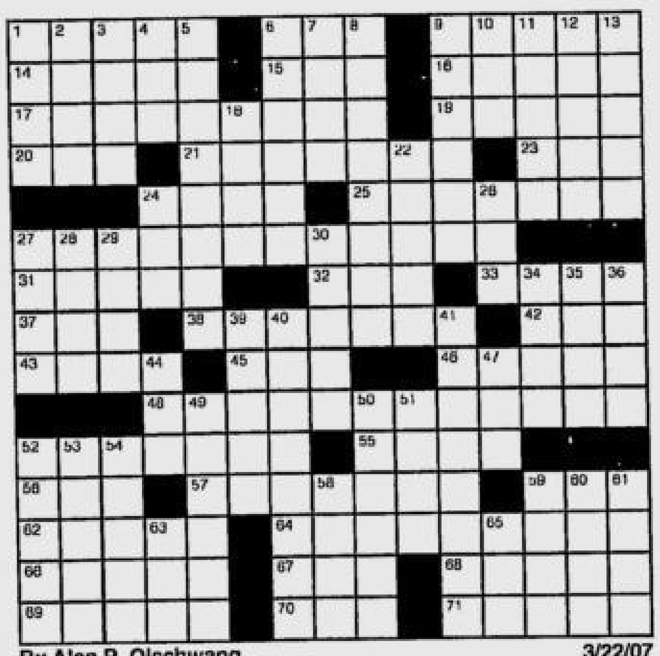

CORNY NGA AKO, PERO IKAW NAMAN TOILET HUMOR LANG ANG ALAM!!!

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


WHAT'S FOR DINNER?
WAA WAA
AAAH
MOMMIE MOMMIE
WAAAAAAH MOMMY MOMMY
ASK A STUPID QUESTION
CHOP CHOP CHOP
SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA

3/22/07

ACROSS

1 Potting soil
6 __ Moines
9 Enjoys a novel
14 Seacoast
15 French soul
16 Window on corbels
17 Start of Evan Esar quip
19 Model Campbell
20 Needle feature
21 Bestowed
23 Nol of Cambodia
24 Musial or Getz
25 Braking
27 Part 2 of quip
31 George who was Mary
32 Obtained
33 Gape wide
37 Double curve
38 Demanded more from performers
42 To and __
43 Spouse
45 Charged particle
46 Time for a shower?
48 Part 3 of quip
52 Control substance
55 "Fernando" group
56 Gulf
57 Backslider
59 Former power grp.
62 Culture mediums
64 End of quip
66 Pang
67 Recombinant letters
68 Singer Baker
69 River frolicker
70 Rower's need
71 Kel's pal on Nickelodeon

DOWN

1 Latin 101 verb
2 Nautical greeting
3 Terminus of all roads?
4 Uno e due
5 Iron ore
6 Vietnamese port
7 Qatar leader
8 Summons
9 Repetitious musical themes
10 Slice of history
11 Garlic sauce
12 Evil spirit
13 Support loop
18 McGregor of "Trainspotting"
22 Select few
24 __-mo
26 For what reason?
27 Abound
28 "Lohengrin" lass
29 Inventory
30 "...the __ of defeat"
34 Do groomed with a pick
35 Court paper
36 __ contendere
39 Mythical weeper
40 Seven Cities of Cibola seeker
41 Dawn
44 PC key
47 Org. of Toms and Woods
49 More concise
50 Hungarian
51 Cain's brother
52 "Phaedo" writer
53 Illuminate
54 Separated
58 Sicilian resort
59 Not "fer"
60 Singer James
61 Sleuth Charlie
63 Caviar
65 Wind dir.

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

S	T	A	B	■	A	M	M	O	■	S	T	A	F	F
L	I	L	I	■	S	O	I	R	■	T	A	M	I	L
O	V	A	L	■	P	A	N	S	■	A	R	E	N	A
W	O	R	K	W	I	T	H	O	U	T	A	N	E	T
■	■	■	O	A	R	■	■	N	N	E	■	■	■	■
S	P	A	■	R	A	R	A	■	E	L	I	T	E	S
E	L	L	A	■	N	O	T	E	■	A	N	O	D	E
P	A	I	N	T	T	H	E	T	O	W	N	R	E	D
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A	S	S	E	R	T	■	T	A	C	O	■	I	S	R
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D	R	A	W	A	C	O	N	C	L	U	S	I	O	N
R	E	C	A	P	■	D	E	L	A	■	T	R	U	E
U	N	A	G	I	■	E	M	I	T	■	O	A	S	T
B	I	D	E	N	■	L	O	P	E	■	P	E	T	S

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3/22/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're self-assured and often know what you want. Because of this, many of you stay on your chosen path for years. You try to live up to the high ideals you have for yourself, which are often quite heroic. You find it easy to maintain an enthusiasm for life. Seek out solitude this year to learn something very important to you.
Birthdate of: Reese Witherspoon, actress; William Shatner, actor; Matthew Modine, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Possibly, others will oppose you today. However, do not retaliate or resist. Take this with grace and forbearance. (Live to fight another day.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Bosses, parents and others seem to block your plans today. This might be the case, or it might just appear that way. Give others the benefit of the doubt. Be patient.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Avoid arguments about politics or religion. You cannot change the minds of others once they are made up. Just agree to disagree.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Disputes about shared property, taxes, inheritances or debts might occur today. This is not the best day to pursue this kind of thing, not if you want to win. Wait a day or two.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Differences with partners set your teeth on edge today; yet you cannot speak up. You're doing a slow boil! That's OK. Demonstrate noble grace under pressure.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Co-workers might disagree with your suggestions or ways of doing things today. Why make a big deal out of this? When the annals of history are written, will anyone care? (Exactly.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Lovers' quarrels and disputes with children are highly likely today. You have a choice: You can be part of the problems, or part of the solution. You choose.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Domestic conflicts might drain your energy and distract you from what you should be doing today. Do not let this happen. Focus on what you originally wanted.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You can't help disagreeing with someone today (especially a sibling or relative). But to what purpose? Why win the argument and lose a friend?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Do not force financial issues today. It isn't worth it. Do not insist on getting your own way. In the long run, you will lose face—or worse.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Be patient with partners and friends today. (We never get mad at people we don't care about. We only get excited about people who matter.) Therefore, show some consideration to those you care about.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): It is frustrating to be angry about something and yet not be able to speak up. Even though this is a bummer, let it go.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

by Dave Green

						9	6	
				8	1	2		
		9	5					
7	2							
3								5
							4	3
					7	8		
		5	3	2				
	9	1						

Difficulty Level ★★★

3/22

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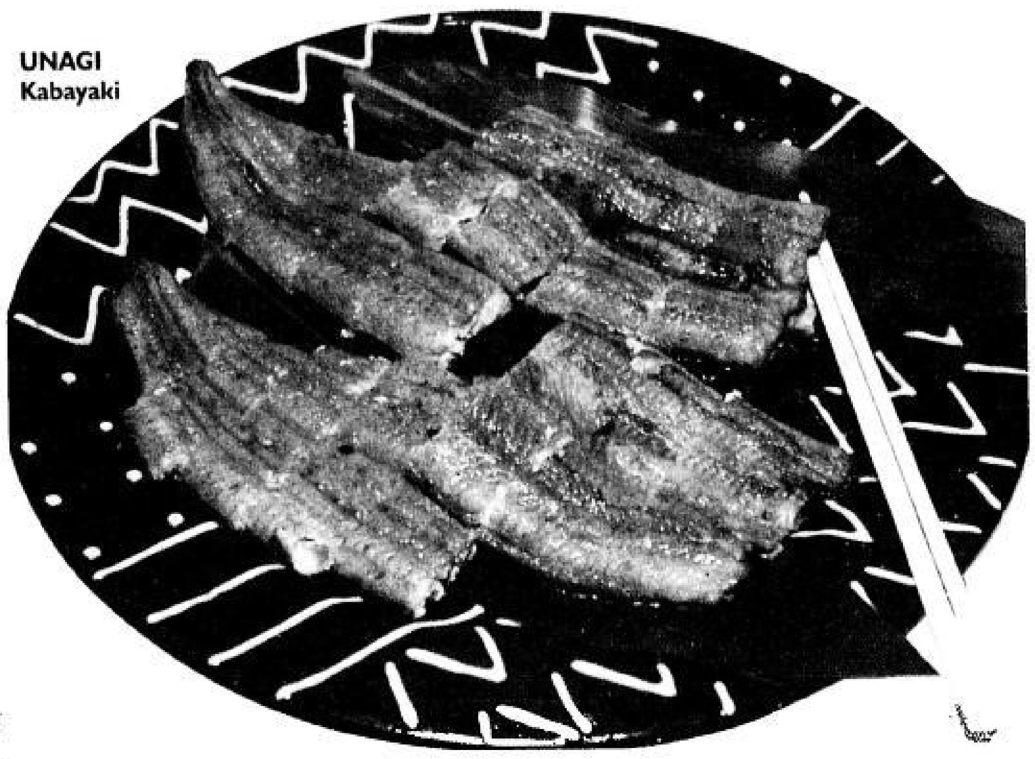
HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

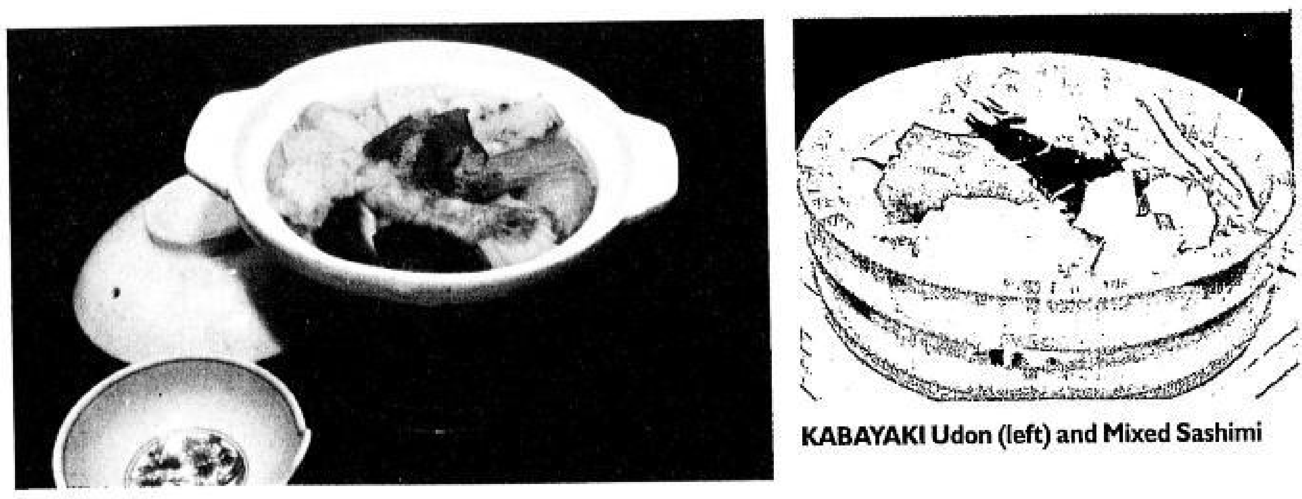
Answer to previous puzzle

5	8	9	6	3	1	2	7	4
3	1	7	9	4	2	5	6	8
6	4	2	7	5	8	3	1	9
8	5	4	3	1	9	6	2	7
9	7	6	5	2	4	1	8	3
2	3	1	8	7	6	4	9	5
7	6	3	1	9	5	8	4	2
4	9	8	2	6	3	7	5	1
1	2	5	4	8	7	9	3	6

Difficulty Level ★★★

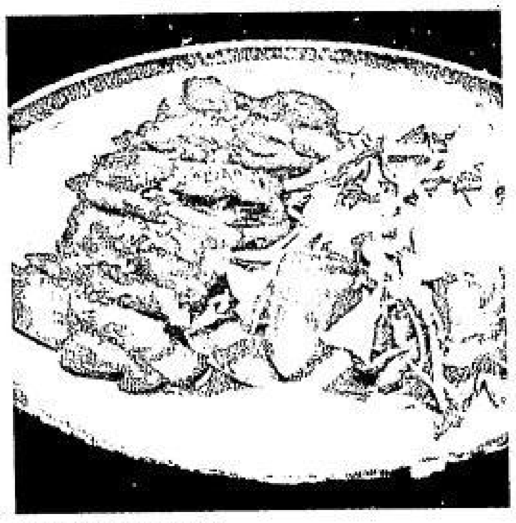


UNAGI Kabayaki



KABAYAKI Udon (left) and Mixed Sashimi

Japan's four seasons in one restaurant



CHICKEN Teriyaki

From page E1

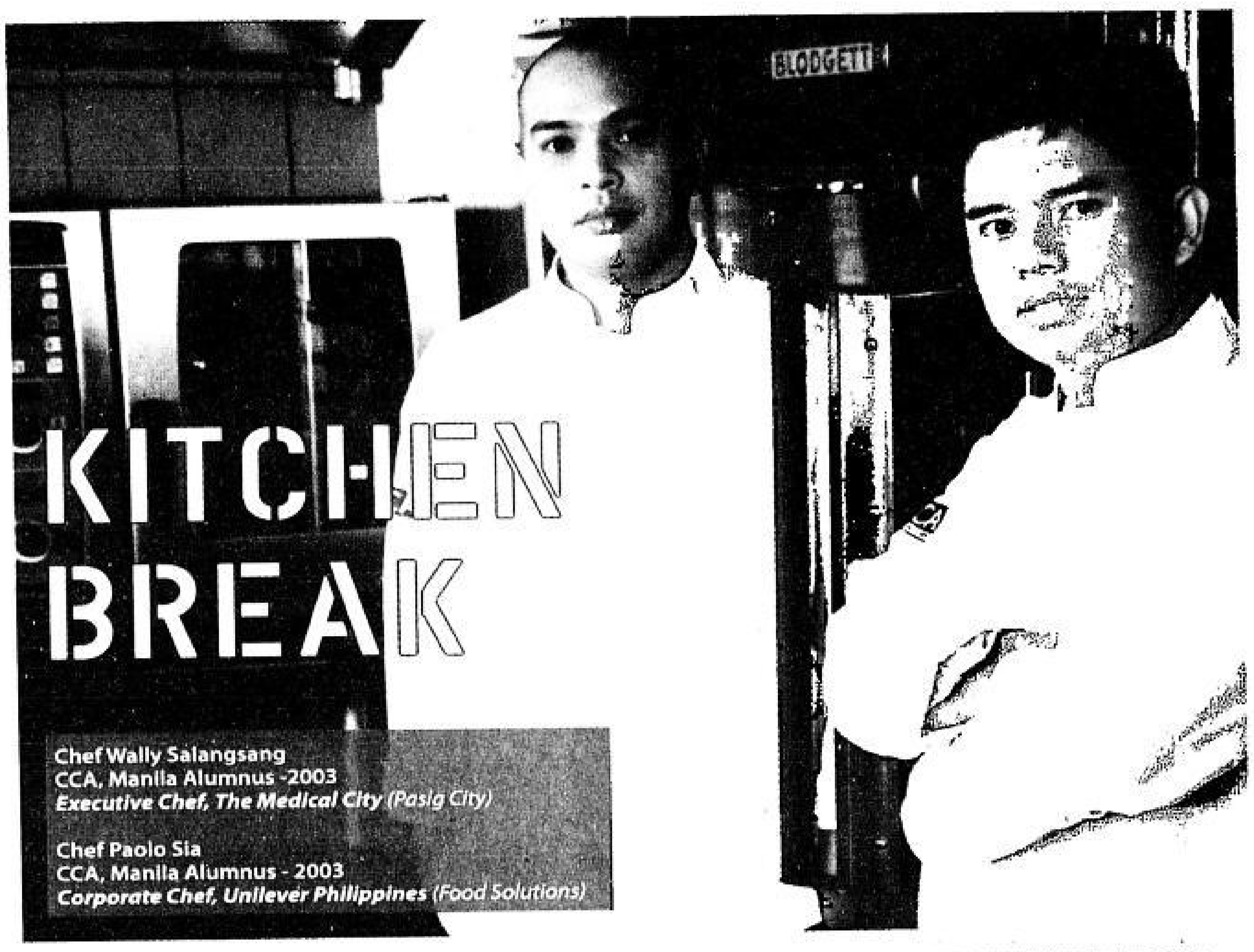
from appetizer to dessert and includes sashimi, tempura, and a filling *dobi mushi* soup; and selections of sushi and sashimi, like Shime Saba, Tai Sashimi, Ramachi Sashimi, Amaebi Sashimi, and Kasi Taraba Sushi.

Aside from new additions to the menu, Century Tsukiji has adopted an exciting new look, specifically festive interiors. There is an interesting interplay of colors (black, white and yellow) and textures (wood and steel).

Hanging lamps help produce the authentic Japanese look. A large painting on one wall depicts the four seasons of Japan.

"We want our guests to also be at home in our new home. We welcome them and we want to serve them only the best in Japanese cuisine," says Minny Katayama.

CENTURY Tsukiji's formidable culinary team: Shinji Furukawa, Yusuke Katayama, Minny Katayama, Yamazaki Seiko and Seiji Kamura



KITCHEN BREAK

Chef Wally Salangsang
CCA, Manila Alumnus -2003
Executive Chef, The Medical City (Pasig City)

Chef Paolo Sia
CCA, Manila Alumnus - 2003
Corporate Chef, Unilever Philippines (Food Solutions)

Enter the intriguing world of culinary arts. Sneak into our kitchens and have a walk-through along the corridors where Wally and Paolo were highly trained to specialize as chefs in the corporate world.

Medical industry and fast moving consumer goods. Who ever said that chefs can't break outside the kitchen walls?

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Application and enrollment are on going for the opening of classes in June and August 2007:

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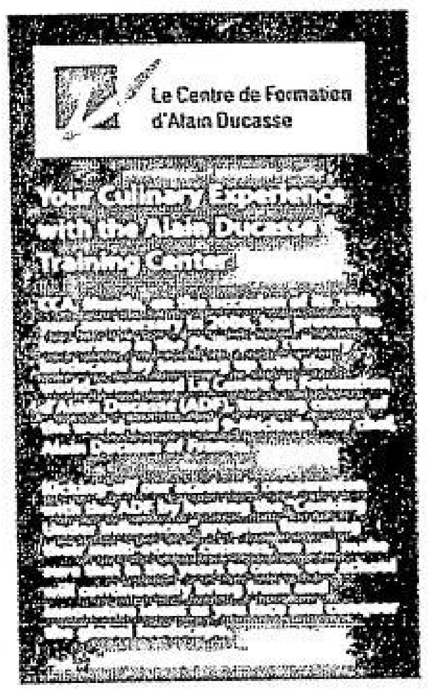
Baking-Pastry Arts & Technology Management (1 to 2 years)

For schedules of entrance exams and other details, please call **426-4840** and look for Ms. Agnes Manalaysay or Ms. Jonarry Cruz.



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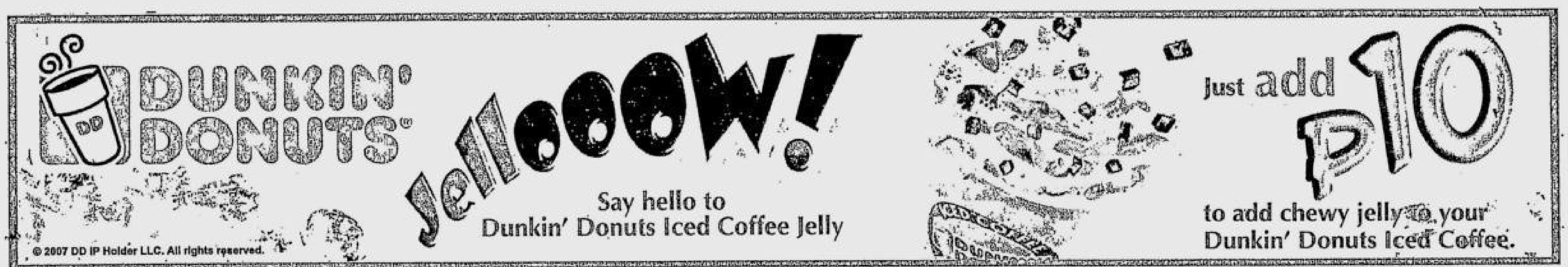
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A fun time as Fantine

Lea Salonga–first Asian to play the part on Broadway–tackles mom role offstage, too

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

WRITING FROM NEW York, singer-actress Lea Salonga told INQUIRER Entertainment via e-mail that her big Broadway homecoming last Feb. 22 was "quite uneventful."

"We were greeted by rain and cold weather," she recalled. "If only there was more to it than that, but no."

But since her arrival coincided with her 36th birthday, she had the perfect excuse to party … somewhat.

"We had dinner out with friends and family and it was nice," she recounted.

Apart from taking over the role of Fantine in "Les Misérables" (the first Asian to do so on Broadway), Lea's Big Apple trip this time around is made extra memorable because she's with baby Nicole Beverly who's turning one on May 16.

"Playing a wonderful role in a great Broadway show and the baby are more than enough to make this visit special," she explained.

After dizzying rehearsals, she made her grand debut as Fantine on March 6. When she wraps up her contract later in the year, she'll move on to the Asian tour of "Cinderella," which kicks off in Manila in April 2008.

Lea is fond of "Cinderella" because it's a role originated by her idol, Julie Andrews, with whom she worked in a 1992 Hollywood Bowl recording of "The King and I."

"Un-diva-like, down-to-earth, humble, grounded, awesome," Lea enthused about Julie.

She didn't scrimp on praise, either, when describing her "Les Miz" cast mates—particularly Filipino-Americans Ali Ewoldt and Adam Jacobs, who play her grown daughter Cosette and Cosette's partner Marius, respectively.

THE PINAY Tony winner on the Broadway stage with the "Les Miz" ensemble

SHE HAD a week and a half to prepare for the show.

What was opening night like?

It went quite well, I think. If my friends and family are to be believed, I did all right!

What about audience feedback?

So far, audiences have been wonderful. Standing ovations every single performance. The full audience is on its feet once our Valjean (Alexander Gemignani) takes his bow.

What went on in your mind when you sang "I Dreamed a Dream" for the first time on Broadway?

Okay, let me preface this by saying that

A FUN/ F3

DID YOU KNOW...
WAS THAT for real? During the Enpress Awards over the weekend, hosts Heart Evangelista and Judy Ann Santos had a little on-cam tussle over the word "po," which the former used to address the latter. Juday snapped, "OK *lang ang nararamdaman ko … 'wag mo lang ako gamitan ng* 'po.'"

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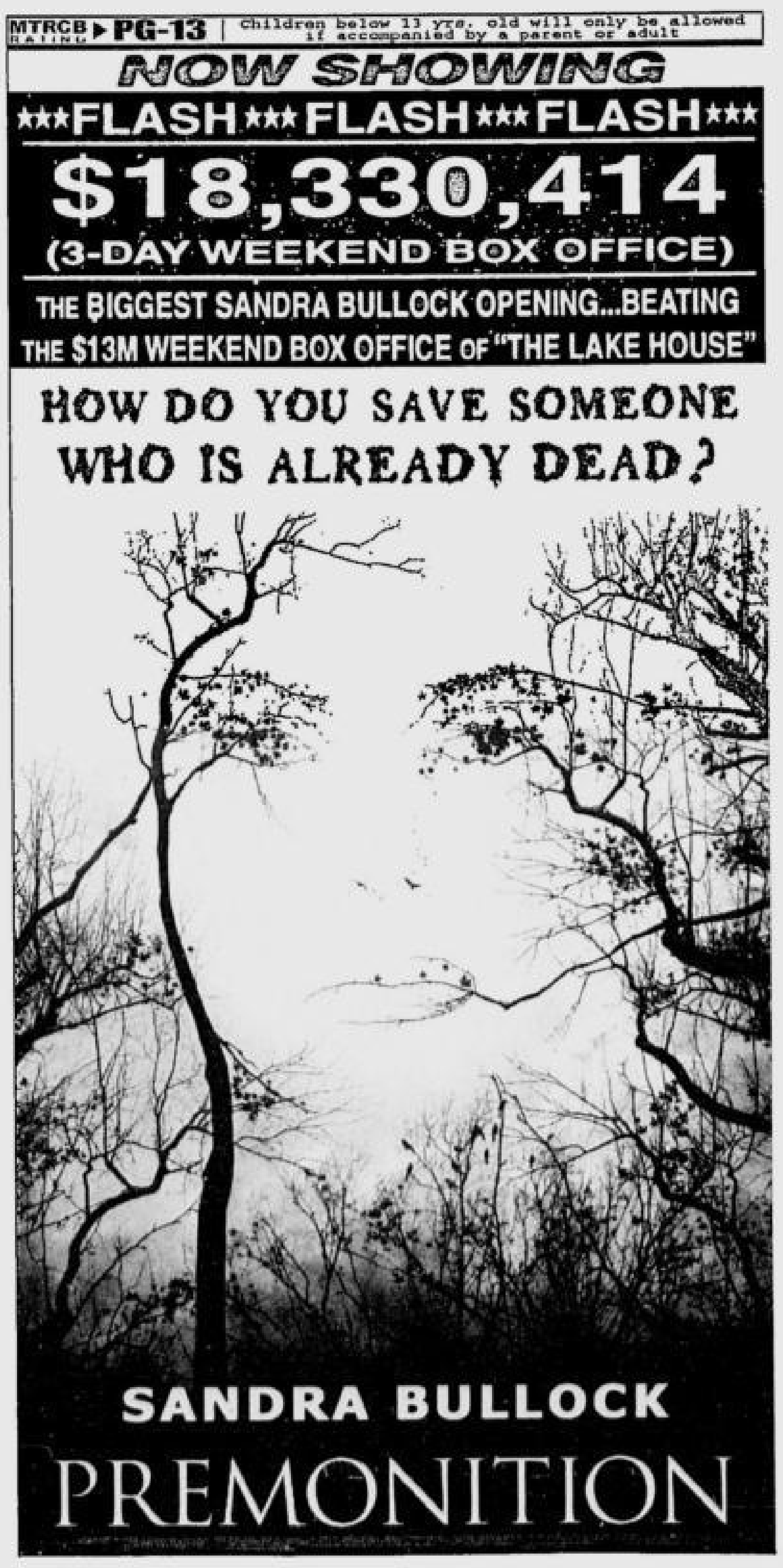
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SANDRA BULLOCK
PREMONITION

CHEER FACTOR

SAN FRANCISCO—VIDEO GAMES WITH ACtion dictated by brain waves will be available by the end of the year, according to a Silicon Valley company that has created low-cost headsets. A man dressed as Darth Vader demonstrated the NeuroSky invention on Thursday at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco. "It's like the Force," he said, referring to the film premise that unseen energy could be tapped and channeled by the mind. The credit actually goes to sensors that gauge people's moods by measuring brain wave emissions, according to NeuroSky spokesperson Greg Hyver. "The technology has been around for a hundred years," Hyver said. "The problem was the cost, and we fixed that." *AFP*

Not ready for his close-up

AUSTIN, TEXAS—AS DOCUmentary filmmakers, Debbie Melnyk and Rick Caine looked up to Michael Moore.

Then the Toronto-based couple tried to do a documentary about him—and ran into the same sort of resistance Moore famously faces in his own films.

The result is "Manufacturing Dissent," which turns the camera on the confrontational documentarian and examines some of his methods. The movie had its world premiere Saturday night at the South by Southwest film festival.

Melnyk and Caine, a husband-and-wife team, spent more than two years making the movie, which follows Moore on his college tour promoting 2004's "Fahrenheit 9/11." The film shows Melnyk repeatedly approaching Moore for an interview and being rejected; members of Moore's team also kick the couple out of the audience at one of his speeches, saying they weren't allowed to be shooting there.

At the Saturday premiere, the filmmakers expected pro-Moore plants in the audience heckling or trying to otherwise sabotage the screening, but it turned out to be a tame affair.

"It went really well," Melnyk said. "People liked the film and laughed at the right spots and got the movie and we're really happy about it."

Moore hasn't commented on "Manufacturing Dissent," and Melnyk thinks he never will. But the two said they were still fans of Moore's movies. *AP*

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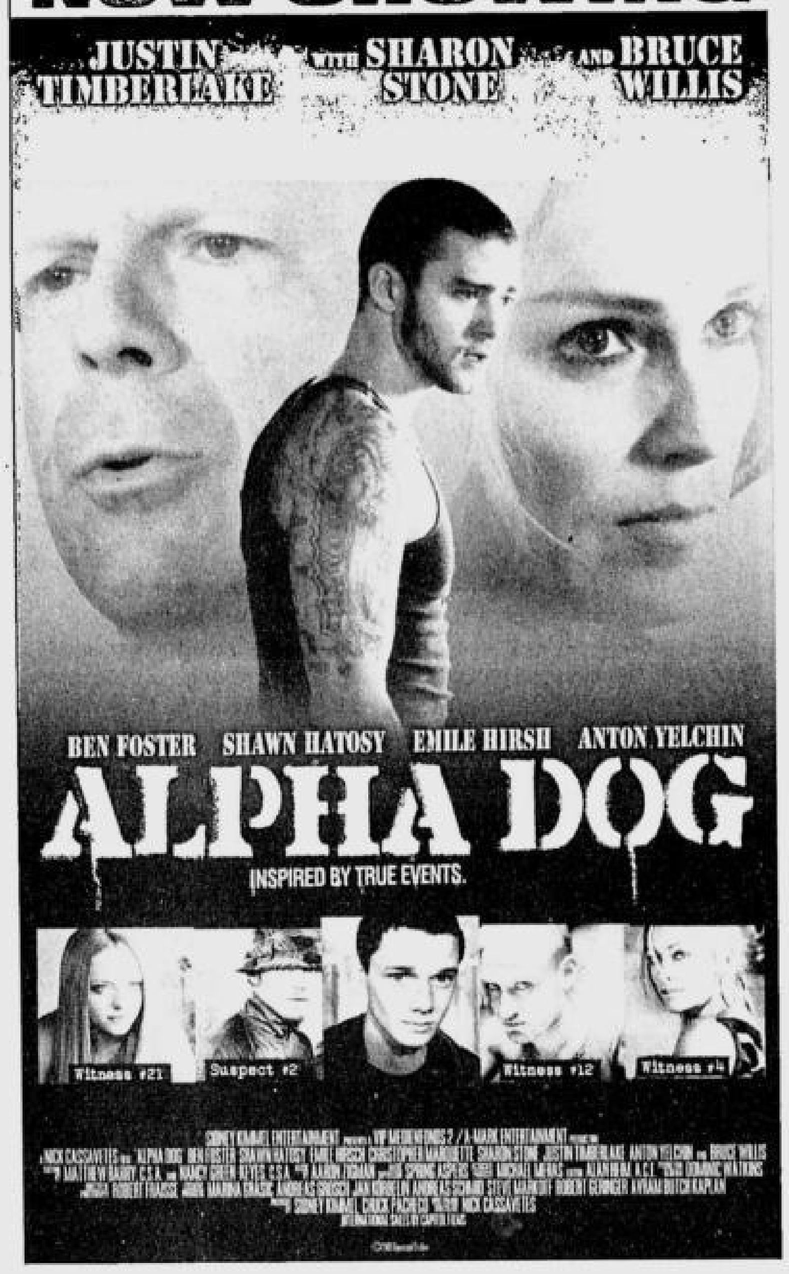
2	300	12:15, 2:45, 5:35, 8:25, 11:10	R-13
3	NORBIT	1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00	PG-13
4	TURISTAS	1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:40, 11:00	R-13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[illegible]

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TURISTAS R13 1:45,3:55,6:05, 8:15,10:25	PREMONITION 1:10,3:30,5:50, 8:10,10:30	DREAMGIRLS PG13 12:40,3:20 BECAUSE I SAID SO PG13 6:00,8:10,10:20
300 R13 12:30,3:00,5:30, 8:00,10:30	ALPHA DOG R13 1:45,4:15,6:45,9:15	NORBIT PG13 1:45,3:55,6:05, 8:15,10:25

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MUSIC MUSEUM

March 23, 2007	SITTI... IN LOVE	8:30 PM
March 30, 2007	[illegible]	8:30 PM
APRIL 13,14 & 20,21, 2007	ROCK THE VOTE	8:00 PM
May 4, 2007	HALE	8:00 PM

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② 300 MTRCB R-13 1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00
③ TURISTAS MTRCB R-13 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
④ PREMONITION MTRCB PG-13 12:05, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00
PREMIERE THEATRE BECAUSE I SAID SO MTRCB PG 13 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:10, 10:00
Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice.
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In celebration of Women's Month Shangri-La Plaza presents concert-pianist Ingrid Sala Santamaria with the Peace Philharmonic Philippines String Quartet on March 24 (Sat.) at 7pm and ballerina par excellence Lisa Macuja with Ballet Manila on March 31 (Sat.) at 6:30 pm at the Grand Atrium, Level 2
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G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 TURISTAS	2 ALPHA DOG	3 THX 300 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	4 BREAKING & ENTERING	5 BECAUSE I SAID SO	6 NORBIT	7 PREMONITION	
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 300	2 NORBIT			
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX 300 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX NORBIT GUARANTEED SEATS			
	3 BREAKING & ENTERING GUARANTEED SEATS	4 DREAMGIRLS GUARANTEED SEATS	5 TURISTAS GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX NORBIT GUARANTEED SEATS	2 TURISTAS			
	3 300	4 ALPHA DOG	5 PREMONITION		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 DREAMGIRLS	2 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS	3 300	4 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA	
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 NORBIT	2 PREMONITION			
	3 MONAY NI SHOLI	4 ZOMBIES	5 TURISTAS		

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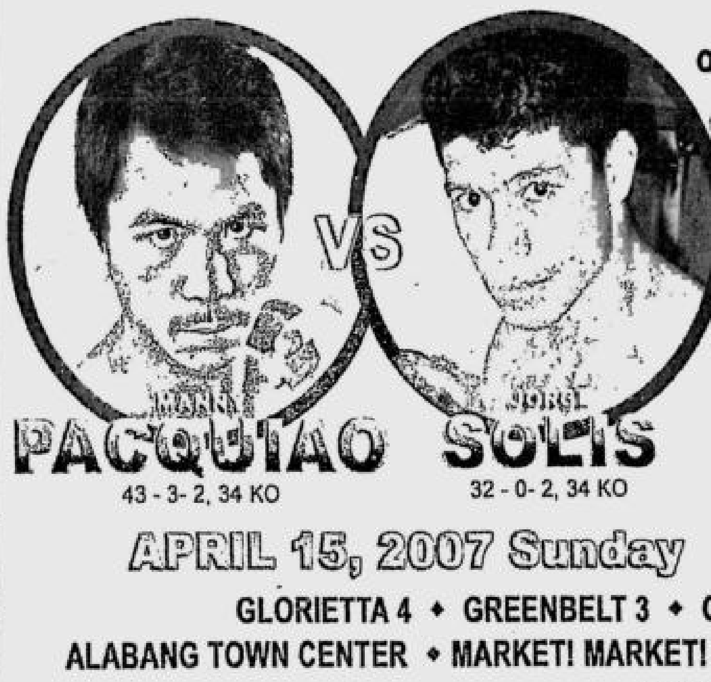
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WITH her idol Julie Andrews in 1992

> 'My mom's here (NY) with me and Nic, thank God! Talk about heroic'

A fun time . . .

From page F1

whenever I have to sing my solo number in a show, I get awfully paranoid. So, the only things going through my mind were the lyrics. Once that was over, I heaved a huge sigh of relief and went on with my track. It's getting easier, somewhat. But I always run through the lyrics in my dressing room before I head onstage.

What was it like interacting with Fil-Ams Ali Ewoldt and Adam Jacobs and the rest of the "Les Miz" cast?

Oh, Ali and Adam are both great, and awfully talented! I was very pleased and proud to hear that they were in the show, and that they deserve to be. And they're both sweet as well. The rest of the company is a great bunch to work with. Talented and good people.

What were rehearsals like?

Rehearsals went by in a blur. I was given a week and a half to prepare, and then I was on. There was blocking for both my Fantine and ensemble tracks, music rehearsals, staging, whatever. Add to that costume fittings, wig fittings and publicity. But thankfully I had many hands to guide me and lead me along to wherever I needed to go.

How did you prepare for Fantine?

First off, I read the Fantine passages in Victor Hugo's novel, just to get a grip on her character and circumstances. Her life is a staggering example of such misfortune. She starts off as the lover of a member of the bourgeoisie who then abandons her and their child. She leaves the child at the inn owned by what she thinks are kindly people. She finds work in her old hometown, gets fired, sells everything she owns—including her hair, teeth and finally her body. She goes from innocence to losing all shame. And I have to do all that in 20 minutes—thankfully without the "selling of the teeth" part.

Have you had time to watch other Broadway plays?

Unfortunately, no. But because I was a guest speller on the hit Broadway show "Spelling Bee," I got to see that one! It was so much fun. Jose Llana (my co-star in "Flower Drum Song") is in it, and he's wonderful!

How are you coping, juggling mothering and Broadway?

My mother is here with me, thank God! She's doing a lot of the caretaking. I have asked her if she wants additional help, but she's always refused. Talk about a heroic feat. Then again, given that it's my mom, I'm not surprised.

Have you taken Nicole backstage in "Les Miz"?

Nope, not yet. Once the weather's better I'll take her.

How has motherhood informed/enriched your work as theater actress?

I guess I'm just more reactive. I'm thinking less, and that's good. My instincts are at work more now, and I'm now more prone to make a stronger choice because I'm going by my gut. If my choice is wrong, the director will let me know. At least, I make a choice.

WEEKEND BOX OFFICE

Top 10 movies at the North American box office for the three-day weekend beginning Mar 16

300 - Warner Bros. Pictures

TW	LW	Title	Gross	WR
1	1	300	$31.2 mln	2
2	2	Wild Hogs	$18.8 mln	3
3	☆	Premonition	$18.0 mln	1
4	☆	Dead Silence	$7.8 mln	1
5	☆	I Think I Love My Wife	$5.7 mln	1
6	3	Bridge to Terabithia	$5.1 mln	5
7	4	Ghost Rider	$4.0 mln	5
8	5	Zodiac	$3.1 mln	3
8	6	Norbit	$2.7 mln	6
10	8	Music and Lyrics	$2.2 mln	5

This Week, Last Week — Weeks in Release
☆ New release
Based on studio estimates compiled on Sunday
REUTERS

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NORBIT 1:45 / 4:20 / 6:55 / 9:30
TURISTAS 1:10 / 3:20 / 5:30 / 7:40 / 9:50
PREMONITION 1:30 / 4:10 / 6:50 / 9:30
ALPHA DOG 11:50 / 2:20 / 4:50 / 7:20 / 9:50
MONAY NI MR SHOOLI 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40
ZOMBIES 1:30 / 3:30 / 5:30 / 7:30 / 9:30
300 2:00 / 4:40 / 7:20 / 10:00
PATHFINDER 1:10 / 3:20 / 5:30 / 7:40 / 9:50
BECAUSE I SAID SO 12:10 / 5:00 / 9:50
DREAMGIRLS 2:20 / 7:10
NORBIT 1:10 / 3:45 / 6:20 / 8:55

Gateway PLATINUM CINEMA

ALIMALL 5
1 ZOMBIES 12:30 / 2:30 / 4:30 / 6:30 / 8:30
2 TURISTAS 12:05 / 2:15 / 4:25 / 6:35 / 8:45
3 PREMONITION 12:45 / 3:25 / 6:05 / 8:45
4 ALPHA DOG 1:05 / 3:35 / 6:05 / 8:35
5 300 12:40 / 3:20 / 6:00 / 8:40
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Jack and the Beanstalk
Rapunzel
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[illegible] 632-9116

1 PATHFINDER • THX
2 NORBIT
3 TURISTAS
4 MONAY NI SHOLI
5 ALPHA DOG
6 PREMONITION
7 ZOMBIES
8 indieSine: ANAK ng TINAPA
SA AKING PAGKAGISING
9 BECAUSE I SAID SO
DREAMGIRLS
10 300

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2 NORBIT
3 MONAY ni MR. SHOLI
4 PREMONITION
5 TURISTAS
6 300
7 ZOMBIES

METRO EAST

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1 NORBIT
2 PATHFINDER
3 ZOMBIES
4 TURISTAS
5 PREMONITION
6 300
7 BECAUSE I SAID SO
8 MONAY NI SHOLI

NOVALICHES

[illegible] 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 MONAY NI SHOLI
2 TURISTAS
3 ZOMBIES
4 PATHFINDER
5 300

PIONEER

Ticket Price: P100 687-5378

1 NORBIT
2 PREMONITION
3 TURISTAS
4 ZOMBIES

STA ROSA

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2 300
3 MONAY NI SHOLI
4 THE HITCHER
5 DEAD PEOPLE 2

LIPA

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1 EPIC MOVIE
2 THE HITCHER
3 DEAD PEOPLE 2
4 HAPPY HEARTS
5 MONAY NI SHOLI

DASMARIÑAS

Ticket Price: P75 / 80 (046) 416-4332

1 BECAUSE I SAID SO
2 MONAY NI SHOLI
3 PATHFINDER
4 DEAD PEOPLE 2
5 300

ANGELES

Ticket Price: P 90 (045) 892-2348

1 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING
2 THE NUMBER 23
3 MONAY NI SHOLI
4 THE HITCHER

IMUS

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2 TURISTAS
3 THE NUMBER 23
4 DEAD PEOPLE 2
5 PATHFINDER

STARMILLS

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1 IT's A BOY GIRL THING
2 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
3 MONAY NI SHOLI
4 300
5 THE HITCHER
6 DEAD PEOPLE 2

BACOLOD

Ticket Price: P70 (034) 441-0459

1 IT's A BOY GIRL THING
2 300
3 THE HITCHER
4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
5 THE FOUNTAIN
6 MONAY NI SHOLI

ILOILO

Ticket Price: P60.50/67.50/70.50 (033) 336-8070

1 THE GOOD SHEPHERD
2 300
3 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
4 THE NUMBER 23
5 THE FOUNTAIN
6 HAPPY HEARTS / MONAY NI SHOLI

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REGULAR SHOWING STARTS MARCH 28
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ROCKY BALBOA

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METRO MANILA

SM MALL OF ASIA 556-0104
San Miguel Coca-Cola IMAX THEATRE
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7:00PM
Admission Fee- P250
T-REX IN 3D
1:00PM 2:30PM 4:00PM 5:30PM
Admission Fee- P200
1 TURISTAS
2 PATHFINDER
3 NORBIT
4 BECAUSE I SAID SO
5 ALPHA DOG
6 ZOMBIES
PREMIERE CINEMA
PREMONITION
CENTERSTAGE
300
THE PODIUM
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CINEMA 2
NORBIT
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1 ALPHA DOG
2 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
3 ZOMBIES
4 PATHFINDER
5 HAPPY HEARTS
6 BECAUSE I SAID SO
7 300
8 NORBIT
9 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
10 YOU GOT ME
11 TURISTAS
12 PREMONITION

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901
1 TURISTAS
2 BECAUSE I SAID SO
3 PREMONITION
4 300
5 NORBIT
6 PATHFINDER
7 ALPHA DOG
8 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
9 HAPPY HEARTS
10 YOU GOT ME
11 ZOMBIES
12 SIQUIJOR

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749
1 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
2 BECAUSE I SAID SO
3 TURISTAS
4 300
5 YOU GOT ME
6 NORBIT
7 DREAMGIRLS
8 PREMONITION
9 GHOST RIDER
10 ZOMBIES
11 PATHFINDER
12 HAPPY HEARTS

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416
1 NORBIT
2 TURISTAS
3 300
4 PREMONITION
5 HAPPY HEARTS
6 ZOMBIE
7 PATHFINDER
8 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
9 ALPHA DOG
10 YOU GOT ME

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488
1 PREMONITION
2 300
3 ZOMBIES
4 TURISTAS
5 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
6 NORBIT

SM SOUTHMALL 806-6888
1 PREMONITION
2 NORBIT
3 ZOMBIES
4 300
5 ALPHA DOG
6 PATHFINDER
7 HAPPY HEARTS
8 TURISTAS
9 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI

SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055
1 TURISTAS
2 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
3 HAPPY HEARTS
4 300

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1 TURISTAS
2 ALPHA DOG
3 PREMONITION
4 PATHFINDER
5 NORBIT
6 300
7 BECAUSE I SAID SO
8 DEAD PEOPLE 2
9 HAPPY HEARTS
10 YOU GOT ME
11 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
12 ZOMBIES

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323201-04
1 300
2 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
3 DREAM GIRLS
4 PATHFINDER

SM VALENZUELA 293-3917
1 300
2 DREAMGIRLS
3 PATHFINDER
4 HAPPY HEARTS

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1 HAPPY HEARTS
2 300
3 TURISTAS
4 PATHFINDER

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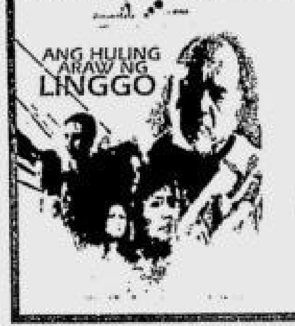

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2 YOU GOT ME
3 PREMONITION
4 ZOMBIES
5 300
6 HAPPY HEARTS
7 TURISTAS
8 PATHFINDER

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1 300
2 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING
3 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
4 THE HITCHER
5 NUMBER 23
6 HAPPY HEARTS

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1 300
2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 YOU GOT ME
4 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS

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1 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
2 YOU GOT ME
3 HAPPY HEARTS
4 EPIC MOVIE

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1 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
2 300
3 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING
4 THE HITCHER
5 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
6 HAPPY HEARTS

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1 HAPPY HEARTS
2 EPIC MOVIE
3 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
4 THE HITCHER

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1 YOU GOT ME
2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 THE HITCHER
4 EPIC MOVIE

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1 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
2 THE GOOD SHEPHERD
3 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
4 300

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1 TURISTAS
2 300
3 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
4 BECAUSE I SAID SO

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1 BECAUSE I SAID SO
2 THE HITCHER
3 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
4 HAPPY HEARTS

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2976998
1 300
2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE
4 MUSIC AND LYRICS
5 THE GOOD SHEPHERD
6 EPIC MOVIE

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1 EPIC MOVIE
2 THE HITCHER
3 HAPPY HEARTS
4 300

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1 NUMBER 23
2 RSERVED
3 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
4 300
5 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING
6 THE FOUNTAIN
7 RESERVED
8 THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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1 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
2 300
3 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
4 DREAMGIRLS
5 MONAY NI MR. SHOOLI
6 SIQUIJOR
7 YOU GOT ME
8 EPIC MOVIE

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4 THE FOUNTAIN

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4 PREMONITION
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2 PREMONITION
3 NORBIT
4 TURISTAS

starmall EDSA-SHAW
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3 PREMONITION
4 MONAY NI SHOLI
5 RESRVED

metropolis star cinema
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1 MONAY NI SHOOLI
2 PATHFINDER
3 TURISTAS
4 300

THEATRES
1 300
2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-5271
1 HAPPY HEARTS
2 EPIC MOVIE
3 RESRVED
4 RESRVED

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 ZOMBIES
2 PATHFINDER
3 300
4 TURISTAS
5 NORBIT
6 PREMONITION
7 ALPHA DOG
8 HAPPY HEARTS
9 MONAY NI SHOLI
10 YOU GOT ME

Blue Wave MARIKINA
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 MONAY NI SHOLI
2 TURISTAS
3 PREMONITION
PACQUIAO VS' SOLIS * APRIL 15, 2007

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto tel 7334220
1 PATHFINDER
2 TURISTAS
3 MONAY NI SHOLI
4 300
5 PREMONITION

THE MARKETPLACE
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1 MONAY NI SHOOLI
2 PATHFINDER
3 ASK THE DUSK
4 RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA
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2 ZOMBIES
3 ALPHA DOG

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Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)-(4449346)
1 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
2 THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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1 NUMBER 23
2 MONAY NI SHOOLI
3 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING
4 HAPPY HEARTS

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2 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA

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2 300
3 NORBIT
4 TURISTAS

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3 300
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2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

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2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 THE HITCHER

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2 NUMBER 23
3 GHOST RIDER
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1 300
2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 FLUSHED AWAY

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2 HAPPY HEARTS

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2 PEEP SHOW

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1 THE HITCHER
2 SHE WALK BY NIGHT
3 NAGBABAGANG LANGIT
4 MONAY NI SHOLI

Lianas MovieCity
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1 DEAD PEOPLE-2
2 HUNGER FOR LOVE
3 MONAY NI SHOLI
4 FIRST TIME
5 SHAOLIN VS' EVIL DEAD

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 MONAY NI SHOOLI
2 DEAD PEOPLE-2
3 HAPPY HEARTS
4 EPIC MOVIE

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 MONAY NI SHOLI
2 OBSESSION

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Ai-Ai appeases Kris by apologizing to James

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

COMEDIENNE **AI-AI DE LAS Alas** is out to break box-office records again via Star Cinema's "Cute ng Ina Mo," which opens April 7. No doubt she will outdo herself in her role as an absentee mother.

In real life, Ai is a 24/7 single mom. She's overjoyed that her eldest son **Sancho**, 16, has graduated from high school.

"Unbelievable *na magka* college *na anak ko! Naiiyak nga ako nung* graduation but **Miguel (Vera)** kept teasing me *kaya biglang umurong ang* tears *ko!*"

The estranged couple are on good terms. Ai enthuses: "Happy *ang dalawang anak namin* (**Shaun**, 13 and **Sophia**, 11) *na* peace *kami. Pati si* Sancho *na anak ko kay* **Rey Malte Cruz** (a stage actor), *si* Miguel *ang kinikilalang* daddy. In fairness, *nag*-attend *si* Papa Miguel *ng* graduation *ni* Sancho. Sperm donor *lang 'yung* biological dad. *Dati gusto akong ihulog ni* Miguel *sa* building *nung grabeng away namin, ngayon bibilhan na niya ko ng* building (laughter)!"

AI-AI DELAS ALAS

But Ai suddenly stops laughing when asked about **James Yap**. She laments: "When I told **Kris** *na isoli muna si* James *sa nanay niya*, I said that in jest. I wanted to cheer up Kris 'cause she was going through a lot. *Na*-shock *talaga ako* when James texted me *na* mad *siya*. Can't he take a joke? *Pati ba naman ako papatulan niya? Naawa ako kay* Kris *kasi siya ang ina-away* so *napilitan na ko mag*-sorry *kay* James *para matapos na lang*."

Ai is too lovable on and off screen not to forgive. Seems like James doesn't have a sense of humor—just as he hardly makes any sense in trying to save face.

New partner?

Could it be true that **Rustom Padilla** is falling for a good-looking university cager? He had no qualms about coming out on national TV. When the time is right, I'm sure Rustom will proudly announce if he has found a partner.

Reunited

Director non-pareil **Maryo J. de los Reyes** happily told me that his shooting with **Aga Muhlach** and **Maricel Soriano** is going smoothly. It's been 10 years since he last worked with them. The yet untitled movie is the very first Aga-Maricel team-up.

"*Nakunan na* love scene *ni* Ags and Mary. Jitters and *kulitan* at first until *naging* comfortable *na*. Maria is no longer stiff in love scenes. Aga has been smitten by her charm," says Direk. "Both are coming back to me as their mentor. They both have more depth and maturity now!"

Angelica Panganiban is also in the cast as a flight attendant. Aga portrays a land developer; Maricel, a gynecologist. Direk says it's a love triangle with a twist. From every angle, the movie is bound to be a masterpiece.

No match

Roxanne Guinoo denies rumors that **Mariel Rodriguez** and **Janelle Jamer** are getting insecure about her entry into "Wowowee." She clarifies: "They are supportive. Teamwork *kami, Walang inggitan*. We all just want to make the audience happy."

What if **Willie Revillame**, a known ladies' man, courts her? She laughs. "*Walang ganung* factor! I have high respect for Kuya Willie. I know *di niya ako tataluhin*. Besides, I prefer guys my age. And after **Joross**, I'm not yet ready to fall again."

At the rate her career is booming, her heart is not about to go *boom-tarat-tarat*.

Idols in concert

Tomorrow at 8 p.m., the "Philippine Idol" finalists star in "Final 12: In Concert" at the Big Dome. Call 9115555.

Meanwhile, check out winner **Mau Marcelo**'s CD "On My Own" (Sony BMG)—with her winning piece, "Try It On My Own," plus "Love Takes Time," "Minsan Lang Kitang Iibigin" and minus-one versions of the songs.

These homegrown talents are ripe for the picking!

Benefit event

Experience a whole new level of music, ramp and auction in "R U Aware?," featuring today's hottest bands, such as Kamikazee and Quezo tomorrow, 7 p.m. at the Bahay ng Alumni UP Diliman. Party with the UP Maroons Men's Basketball team. Call (0916) 705-2320.

C u at my alma mater for a benefit event that matters. Go up and up with UP!

New show

Solar-RPN presents the all-new sitcom "Kemis: Ke Misis Umaasa," inspired by the real-life situation of breadwinners who turn into "housebands." It stars **Bayani Agbayani**.

A reversal of roles happens when his wife (**Cherie Gil**) goes abroad, and he has to look after their kids (**Pauleen Luna** and **Kiray**). Mondays, 8:30 p.m., RPN 9.

Ratings game

Last year, a Kapamilya executive predicted that ABS-CBN would top the ratings game by January 2007. But according to the February '07 ratings data from AGB Nielsen Media Research Philippines, ABS-CBN (15.2 percent) is still behind GMA 7 (17.4 percent).

Out of the top 10 programs, eight are the Kapuso Network's.

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.

MTRCB RATING G General Audience ALL AGES ADMITTED
ONABRU FILMS
PRESENTS
ANG M.O.N.A.Y* NI MR. SHOOLI

Ang hindi tumawa Guilty!

Starring:
JUN URBANO LEO MARTINEZ GLORIA ROMERO
TIRSO CRUZ III GERMAN MORENO
GISELLE SANCHEZ RICKY DAVAO
JIMMY FABREGAS JERIC RAVAL REZ CORTEZ
CARIDAD SANCHEZ JIMMY SANTOS
NOEL TRINIDAD NANETTE INVENTOR
RONNIE LAZARO GARY LISING MATT RANILLO III
LONG MEJIA BEMBOL ROCO ARCHIE ADAMOS
RAMON ZAMORA BOY ALANO PALITO
MELY TAGASA REY SOLO TADO BERTING LABRA
PHILIPP SUPNET JAY AR APUYAN VANESSA MERCADO
BAYANI CASIMIRO JR. RIVA REYES SHALALA
FLORA GASSER RAFRAF SANTIAGO
Written & Directed by:
JUN URBANO
*(MISTEYKS OPDA NEYSION ADRES YATA)
NOW SHOWING